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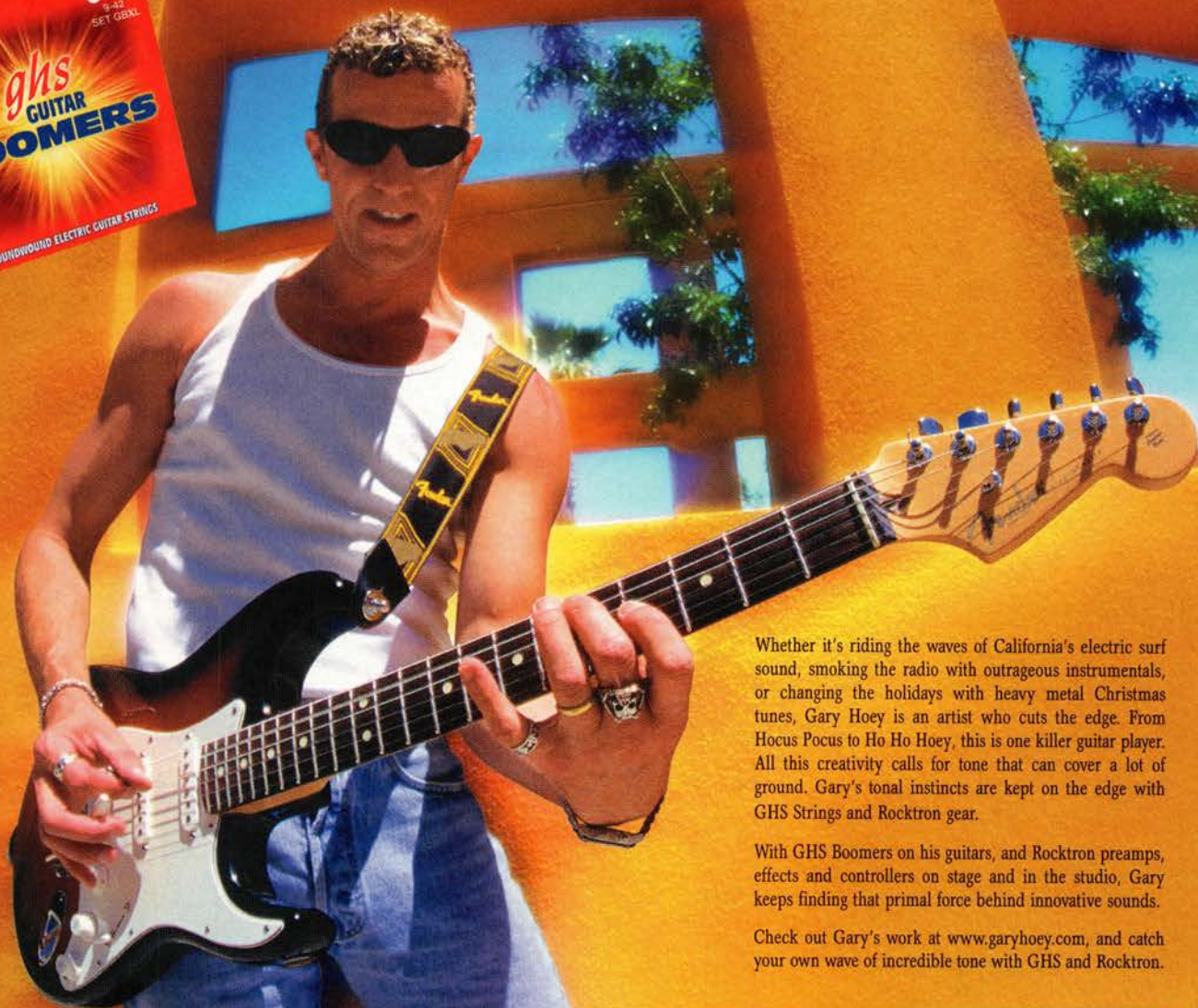
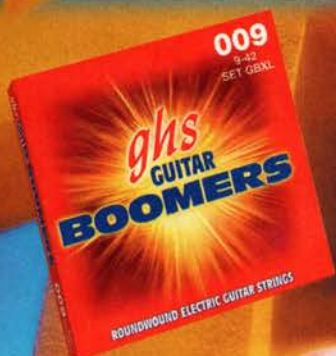
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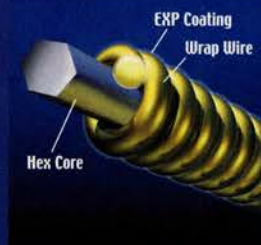
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No matter how magnificent your chops might be, if you play the same licks over and over again, you'll eventually numb your audience into a death-like trance. That's why, of the many blessings we have to celebrate as we mark *GP*'s 35th anniversary year, the magazine's commitment to innovation and refinement thrills me the most.

In the past four years alone, we've refreshed the look and feel of *GP* three times and continually added—or revisited—elements such as factory tours, home-studio applications, and lesson material. And, starting this issue, we're at it again!

Toolbox has been recast to cover more than strict applications, and is now called Input/Output. The new format lets us include fun and funky columns such as Will Ray's Ebay Strategies and the

return (next issue) of George Gruhn's Rare Bird treatises.

Artist coverage has been blown out with larger layouts and a renewed focus on depth. To this end, we've put the smaller artist segments (Pickups and Buzz) on hiatus. Our reasoning: If you're good enough to make the pages of *GP*'s profile section, you deserve more than a few lines of text—and readers deserve more than a cursory look at a kick-ass talent.

Reader mail (thanks for the comments) led us to the conclusion that our lesson material seemed illogically split into a two-headed beast, so we've constructed a Lessons section composed of a master class (a study of a particular artist and/or style) and Chops Builder (specific technique workouts). We're also opening up the section for future "Guest Guru" columns and other treats.

Bench Tests were tweaked throughout 2001, as we added lead gear reviews with huge photos and cleaned up the overall design. Starting this issue, we've increased the "supersized" photos and the number of products covered, added "Kissing Cousins" sidebars (to inform you of similar models in the reviewed product's market category), and revealed estimated street prices (to give you a clearer representation of a product's real-world value).

A less obvious refinement is a revitalized dedication to provide the most comprehensive information on how and why your favorite players do what they do. True, *GP* already delivers deep, serious, and extremely credible data on creativity, technique, and signal chains, but the staff refuses to rest on its laurels. Now we do even more research, ask probing follow-up



questions, and aggressively challenge each editor to ensure readers get the best story we can deliver.

The bottom line: We're indebted to our reader community for making *GP* the most respected and credible guitar magazine in the world, and we don't take that trust for granted. Committing to constant improvement is our way of keeping ourselves fresh, and, hopefully, keeping readers excited, educated, and entertained. That's what *you* ask us to do, and we promise to do it better than anyone else. —MICHAEL MOLENDEN ■

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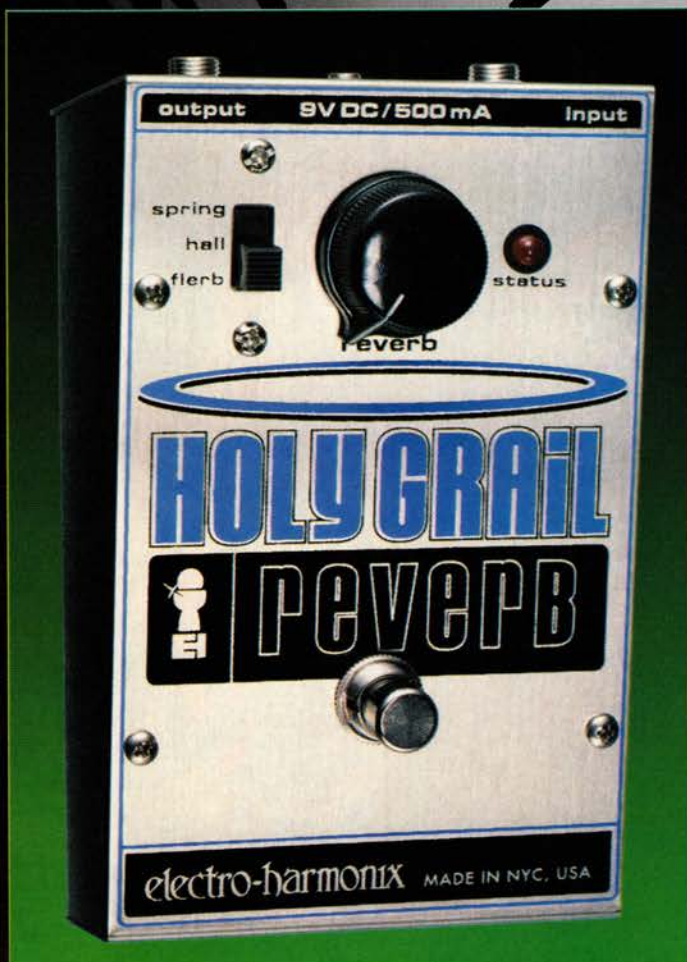



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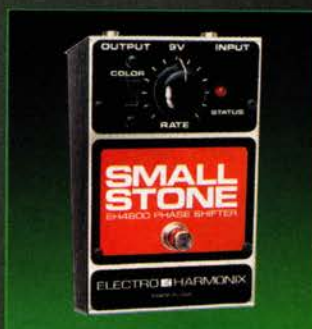
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Feedback

50 Unsung Albums

Wow, *Guitar Player* has been on a roll lately! We've seen Eddie Kramer's incisive photos, learned how Stevie Ray turned failure into success, and been touched by a wonderful tribute to George Harrison. Now we get "Buried Treasures" [April 2002]—brilliant!

David Live—Yes! *Hughes/Thrall*—Yes! *Free Live*—Yes! PIL's *Compact Disc*—Yes! Absolutely flawless choices, and albums I've been praising for years. But I don't want to sound like a know-it-all, and you're article turned me on to albums I'm not familiar with, such as Stevie Salas' *Colorcode* and the Sensational Alex Harvey Band. I'll definitely be searching those out. Thanks for hyping some of my fave albums and a few I've been missing. Ain't album collecting fun?

Brad Page
Manchester, NH

Thanks for "Buried Treasures." I was able to revisit some great influential albums that have had a major impact on who I am as a player, as well as add to my must-check-

out list. One glaring omission however is the first Mahavishnu Orchestra record *The Inner Mounting Flame*. If Miles' *In a Silent Way* was the demo for fusion, then this album was fusion's major-label debut.

Mitch Hodesh
Hollywood, CA

Immense thanks to the *GP* staff for the fabulous list of 50 forgotten albums. I went out and ordered four CDs the day I read it! One suggestion for readers: As good as Peter Green's playing is with Eddie Boyd, it's even more astounding a year later when he recorded with the greatest blues pianist of all time, Otis Spann, on *The Greatest Thing Since Colossus* (1969). Green called him the most inspired musician he ever played with.

Ivan Alex Pavlov
Corvallis, OR

"Buried Treasures" was a neat idea. There are several I'm anxious to find as new-to-me nuggets, while many others brought a smile to my face. It's sure to bring a deluge of mail from those of us who have read your pages and copped tips for decades, but never before thought of writing.

My mentions would include early Buzz

Feiten—either his distinct contributions to the Rascals' *Isle of Real* or his one-time fusion collaboration with keyboardist Neil Larson, *Full Moon*. Along similar guitar/piano work that remains fresh decades later is Sea Level—Jimmy Nalls and Chuck Leavell (post-Allmans and pre-Stones)—with *Cats on the Coast*. Thanks for years of inspiration.

Vince Hope
Rochester, NY

Although I enjoyed the article "Buried Treasures," there are a couple of records I was surprised to find were *not* included: Hampton Grease Band's *Music to Eat*, with Glenn Phillips and Harold Kelling, and anything by the Meat Puppets with Curt Kirkwood on guitar.

Roy Brooks
James Island, SC

A Special Peavey

You guys let the cat out of the bag! A sidebar in which Luther Dickinson raves about Peavey Specials ["The Word," May '02]! I guess it had to happen sooner or later. They are the coolest amps around. So cool, that whenever anyone asked what kind of amp I use, I told



rosewood...

them, "You know, the usual, Fender/Marshall/Vox." But I really used a Peavey Special 112 Wedge. It sounds amazing—clean or distorted.

And by the way, don't let anyone know about Gallien-Krueger guitar amps—especially the 112SC.

Mark Kata
Shelby Township, MI

The Kid's Alright

Thanks for featuring David "Kid" Ramos in the April issue. Ramos has been a gunslinger blues legend in Orange County since he really was "the Kid," and it is heartwarming to see him finally get some national recognition. The Kid is a passionate and knowledgeable purveyor of the blues and a monster of tone! It was our local loss when the Fabulous Thunderbirds stole him out of the OC.

In a local scene all too often filled with egos and attitudes, Ramos is a genuine, unselfish, all-around nice guy. At last year's local blues fest, he was set to headline with the Thunderbirds. Very early in the day, he came out and jammed with one of the unknown opening acts, and they literally stopped the show. In the early '90s, he gigged occasionally at a club I managed. As he unpacked for his

second appearance, I noticed he had done some mods to his Tele. I mentioned the mods as he set up. He burst into a huge grin, thrust his vintage Tele into this stranger's hands, cajoled me to play it, and proudly pointed out the improvements.

The list of talented collaborators on his newest album reads like his resume, and it's a virtual *Who's Who* of West Coast Swing. He has not forgotten those he worked with, and he still enjoys playing with them. If greater success comes to Kid Ramos, it couldn't happen to a nicer guy.

Michael Ramsey
Huntington Beach, CA

OOPS!

In our review of Thin Lizzy's *Black Rose* album ["Buried Treasure," April '02], we inadvertently attributed the solo in the song "S&M" to Gary Moore. It was, in fact, played by Scott Gorham. Sorry, Scott!

In our recent *Guitar & Bass Buyer's Guide*, we mistakenly listed two Schecter guitars—the A-5X and C-5X—that had been discontinued long before the guide's publication.

We also erroneously referred to Dunlop Mfg. Inc. as Jim Dunlop, and failed to list the following new products: DB-01 Dimebag Sig-



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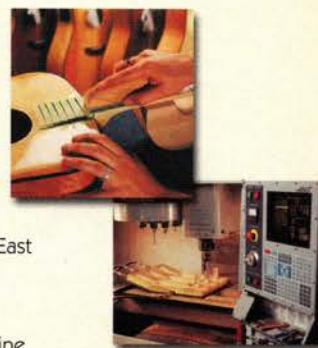


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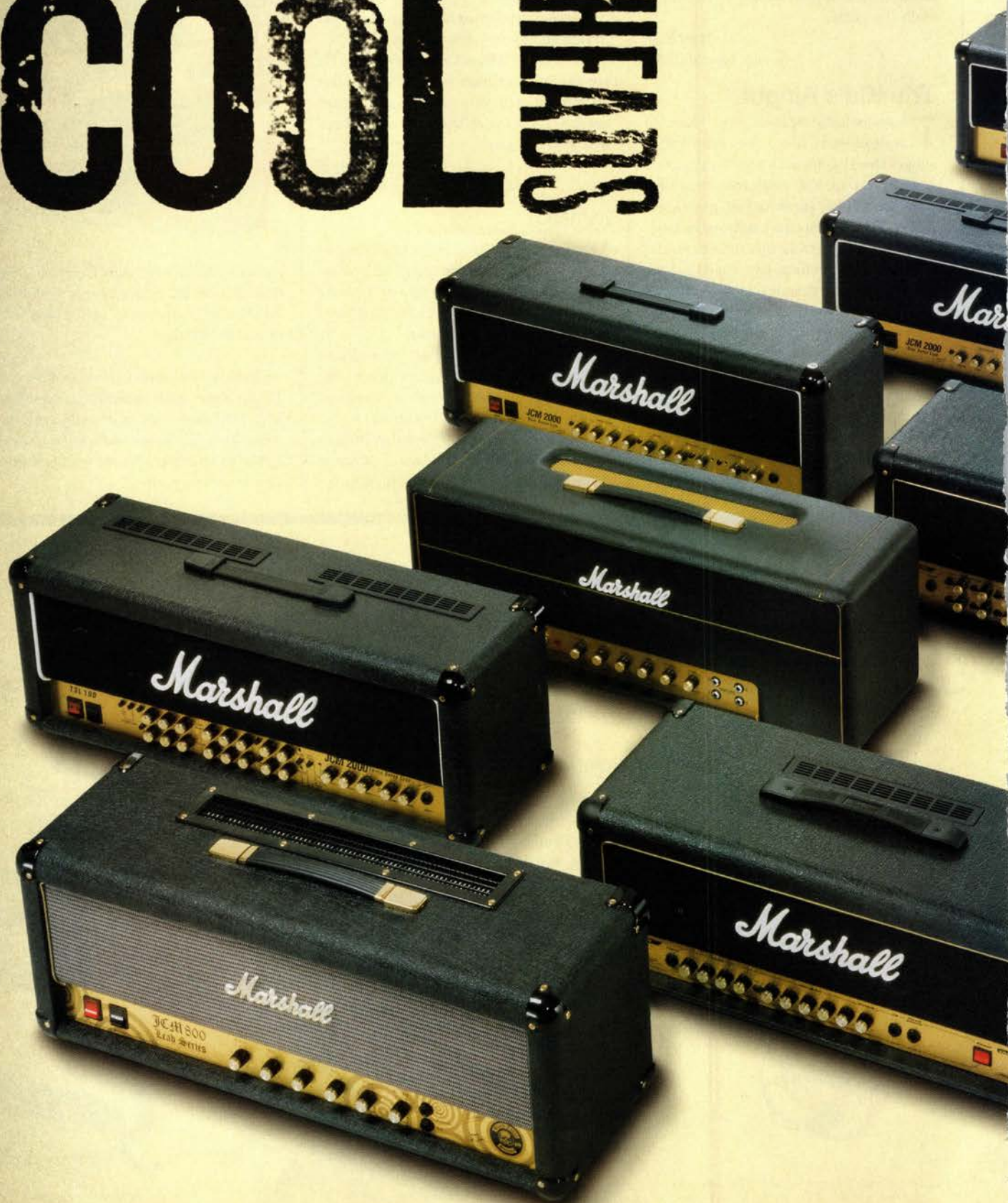
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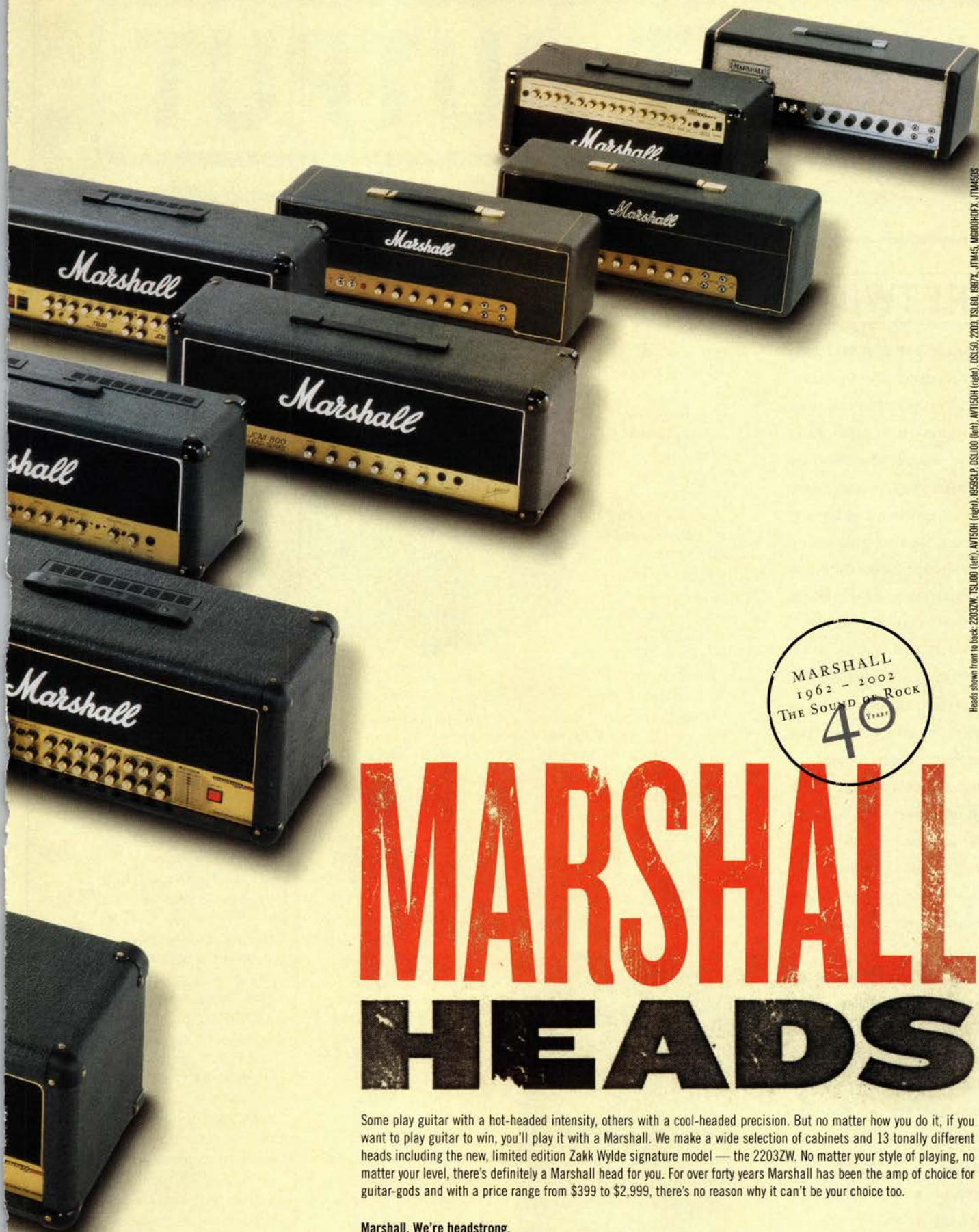
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Heads shown front to back: 2203ZW, TS100 (left), AVT50H (right), 1955SLP, DS100 (left), AVT150H (right), DS150, 2003, TS160, 1987X, JTM45, MC100HFX, JTM450S

INPUT OUTPUT

FRETWIRE

SMELLS LIKE ANOTHER BOOK: Riverhead Books—an imprint of Penguin Putnam—won the rights to publish **Kurt Cobain's** journals when they were auctioned off by his wife and estate executor, **Courtney Love**, in February. Consisting of 23 notebooks—totaling about 800 pages of text and drawings—the diaries date from before Nirvana's formation in 1987 to Cobain's death in 1994, and are purported to contain his suicide note as well as hand-written lyrics to "Smells Like Teen Spirit." The hard cover version is due out in the fall. . . . **GIBSON HONORS:** The 2002 Orville H. Gibson Guitar Awards—which honor standout, guitar-driven artists of the last year—were handed out at a ceremony on February 26 at Hollywood's Knitting Factory. **Scotty Moore** and **Earl Scruggs** received Lifetime Achievement awards, while **U2**, **The Edge**, **Dave Matthews**, **India.Arie**, **Brad Paisley**, **Gillian Welch**, **Keb' Mo'**, and **Pete Yorn** were among the other award recipients. . . . **GRAMMY GUITARS:** It wasn't a bad year for guitarists at the 44th Annual Grammy awards: **Eric Clapton**

PAWNSHOP PRIZE Webster Chicago 66-1A

Tube amps have evolved in ways the early designers couldn't possibly have imagined. But strip away the channel switching, effects loops, voicing switches, and multiple gain stages that accompany most modern guitar amps, and the bones look much as they did more than half a century ago. For proof, you need only examine this Webster Chicago model 66-1A amplifier. It features a pair of RCA 6V6 output tubes, a Tung-Sol 5Y3 rectifier, volume and tone controls, and an 8" speaker. Sounds like the ingredients for a boutique practice amp, right? In fact, the 66-1A's only diverse circuit detail is



its metal-encased 6N7 pre-amp tube—a unique dual-triode that can double as a 10-watt *output* tube.

Originally designed for use with the company's '40s-era portable wire recorder, the compact 66-1A is about the size of a small ice-chest. It sports a maroon leatherette covering, a large compartment for the attached power and input cords (big enough to also accommodate a Tube Screamer), a flip-open hatch for easy tube access, and an enameled control-panel with classy-looking phenolic pointer knobs. The Samsonite suitcase handle was added at a later date.

Amp builders of the '40s generally thought of distortion as a bad thing, and it's obvious that the 66-1A was designed to enhance the laughably lo-fi sound of a wire recorder.

Even when cranked and hit with a hot humbucker, the amp tone remains squeaky clean, and despite having the same output and rectifier tubes as a Fender Deluxe, it's only about half as loud. Adding a distortion pedal turns the 66-1A into a growling little monster with a round, articulate distortion that sounds killer with Strat or P-90 single-coils—slide coolness spoken here.

A nifty relic from the swing era, the 66-1A is sort of like a Deluxe on tranquilizers. This lightweight amp would fit easily on the front seat of your car, and its smooth, rich voice makes it an ideal candidate for living-room jams or studio tracking. This example was recently purchased for \$200—a smokin' deal for a handwired vintage tube amp. Heck, the tubes alone would cost nearly that much! —ART THOMPSON

Amp courtesy of tonefrenzy.com.



LIVE WIRES Saliva

Move over, Elvis! With a mixture of metal, rap, rock, and blues, Saliva has infested the king's hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, and drawn nationwide success with the songs "Your Disease" (Grammy-nominated for Best Hard Rock Performance) and "Click Click Boom."

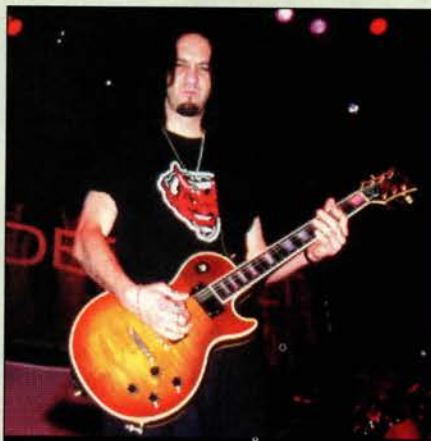
On the road, Saliva guitarists Chris D'abaldo and Wayne Swinny favor classic-rock tones and Gibson guitars. D'abaldo relies on three Les Pauls—two Standards and a Smartwood—and Swinny prefers two Les Paul Customs and an EDS-1275 doubleneck. Each of their Les Pauls are equipped with Gibson Tony Iommi signature pickups and Dean Markley .011-.052 strings. Both players use dropped-D tuning transposed a half-step down (C#, G#, C#, F#, A#, D#), and play with Dunlop Tortex picks (D'abaldo favors .60mm, while Swinny prefers 1.0mm).

D'abaldo's guitar signal is transmitted by an Audio-Technica ATW-R73 wireless system to a pedalboard that includes three Boss units—a TU-2 tuner, a BF-2 flanger, and a CE-5 chorus. The boxes are plugged straight into a Mesa/Boogie Triple Rectifier head driving two Boogie 4x12 cabinets loaded with Celestion Vintage 30s.

Swinny's signal is also transmitted by an Audio-Technica ATW-R73 wireless to a pedalboard that includes five Boss pedals—a TU-2 tuner, a CE-5 chorus, a PH-2 phaser, a CH-1 chorus, and a BF-2 flanger—as well as a DigiTech Whammy II, a CryBaby wah, a Danelectro Dan Echo, and a DOD 270 A/B box that splits his signal between two amps. For clean tones, the DOD's A channel is routed to a 50-watt Marshall JCM800 head (model 2204) and a Boogie 4x12 loaded with Celestion Vintage 30s. The B channel accesses dirty tones, and runs into a Boss NS-2 noise gate and then a 100-watt 1976 Marshall JMP Series head (with master volume) that drives another Vintage 30-loaded Boogie 4x12. Both players' rigs are wired with Monster cable, and all amps are outfitted with Groove Tubes.

—LISA SHARKEN

Thanks to Brian Sateia and Chad "Shaggy" Taylor for technical info.



Wayne Swinny drools devilishly onstage with his Les Paul Custom.



Pavlovian Paul: Chris D'abaldo conditions the crowd with his Les Paul Standard.



Britney Spears stands guard over Swinny's EDS-1275 doubleneck and two Pauls.



D'abaldo's power trio of LPs.



Swinny's Marshalls—a JCM800 and a '76 JMP.



Diamond-plate madness—D'abaldo's two Boogie Triple Rectifier heads.



Bosses aplenty—Swinny's pedalboard.



D'abaldo's Spartan pedalboard.

FRETWIRE

took the Best Pop Instrumental Performance honors; **Steve Lukather** and **Larry Carlton** won Best Pop Instrumental Album for their live release, *No Substitutions*; and Jeff Beck prevailed in the Best Rock Instrumental Performance category. **Earl Scruggs**, **Lucinda Williams**, **Coldplay**, **Tool**, and **Lenny Kravitz** were also Grammy winners. Highlights included performances by **U2**, **Train**, **Bob Dylan**, and **Nelly Furtado** (with guest guitarist **Steve Vai**)—none of whom, by the way, left empty-handed. . . . **PASSING NOTES:**

Remo Palmier—a self-trained guitarist who played with the likes of Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, and Dizzy Gillespie—died on February 3 of leukemia and lymphoma. He was 78. Born in the Bronx, Palmier was a mainstay on the New York jazz scene in the '40s, and released two solo albums. . . . **Mati Klarwein**, the surrealist painter responsible for some of the record industry's most psychedelic album covers, died in early March at his home on the Spanish island Mallorca. He was 70. Most notably, Klarwein was responsible for Santana's *Abraxas* and Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* covers, but he also created cover art for Gregg Allman, Jerry Garcia, Earth, Wind & Fire, and Eric Dolphy, among others. . . . **DIO REGROUPS:** Ronnie James



Poet in motion: Smash Mouth's Greg Camp digs deeper on his Fender Custom Shop Jazzmaster.

SONGCRAFT Greg Camp

"That song sucks," Greg Camp was once told about "Walkin' on the Sun." But when Camp formed Smash Mouth, drummer Kevin Coleman stumbled on an old demo of the tune, fell in love with it, and insisted the band record it. To Camp's surprise, the catchy surf-lounge ditty went number one for five weeks, and put Smash Mouth on the map. Since then, Camp has shown his handmates every song idea he gets, and the results have been tremendous: more radio hits, movie soundtracks (including *Shrek*, *Rat Race*, and *Clockstoppers*), appearances at the 2002 Winter Olympics, and sales of more than five million albums. —JUDE GOLD

"My best songs are written in one sitting," offers Camp. "I'm like the painter who shows up at his studio and scraps what he was work-

ing on the day before because he just doesn't feel the same way. I head to our rehearsal space around 9 p.m., and if I leave the next morning with a finished song in my hand, chances are it's pretty good. If not, I'll just throw it away. When you let stuff sit for too long, you lose the initial vibe you had in your mind. Every once in a while, however, I go back to something I did a year earlier. But that's different, because suddenly the song is fresh again.

"A lot of my song ideas come when this weird little thing starts bubbling in me. I'll just hear a riff, a melody, a drum beat, or a catchy saying, and I'll hum it into my voice mail. A lot of that stuff is ridiculous to listen back to, and I'll say, 'What was I thinking?' But when one of those ideas sparks me, I open up Pro Tools and just go for it!"

TECHNO TOOLS Soft Amps

By now you're probably aware of plug-ins—the software equivalent of rack-mount processors. They patch into compatible hard-disk recording software to provide effects that aren't included in the main program. But although plug-ins have been around a while, they've traditionally been single-function devices (distortion only, for example). However, the new generation of amp-modeling plug-ins model the *complete* guitar-amp signal chain—from the crunch of an overloaded input stage to a speaker cabinet's frequency-response anomalies. Some even throw in a few stompboxes. This new crop—which includes Mackie/Universal Audio's Nigel, Steinberg's Warp, IK Multimedia's AmpliTube, and Line 6's GuitarPort (even though it's more of a soundcard than a plug-in)—has certainly raised the bar for sound quality and functionality, but can they replace the cozy feeling you get from your favorite tube amp?

In the past, the answer was an emphatic "no." Setting aside tonal considerations, playing through a computer in real time used to be frustrating because of the latency (signal delay) caused by converting the signal to digital, process-



ing it in the computer, and converting it back to analog. But that's changing. Steinberg's new ASIO driver protocol has reduced latency dramatically—as have faster processors. Typical latencies are now around two to nine milliseconds, and that's the equivalent of standing two to nine feet away from your amp!

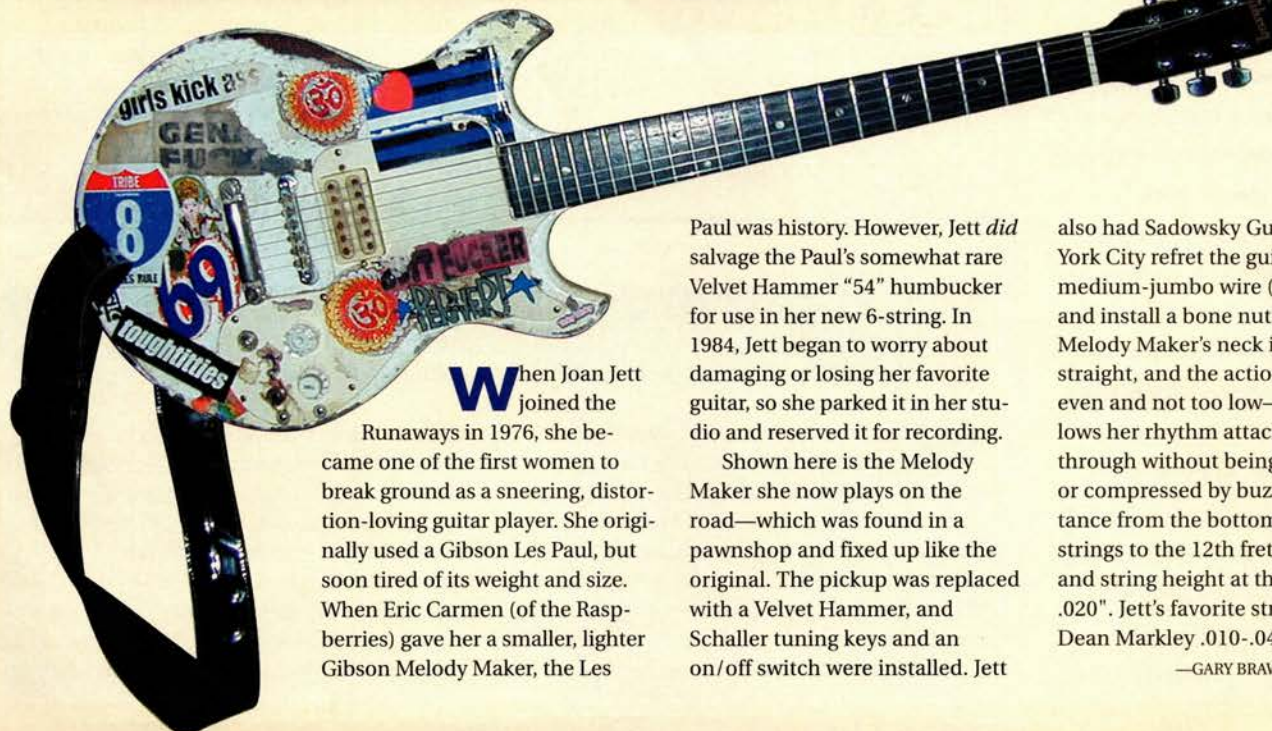
Of course, today's increasingly sophisticated plug-ins tend to suck more power from your computer. But that's *not* the case with Mackie/Universal Audio's Nigel guitar processor—which runs on a separate card designed solely to accelerate plug-in performance by relieving your computer's processor of the "heavy lifting." At present, Nigel only works with compatible plug-ins from the same manufacturer, but third-party support is expected soon.

While it may always feel strange to

think of a guitar amp as pixels on a display, keep in mind that virtual tubes never need replacing, the reverb tank doesn't rattle if you bump it, and the plug-in is *way* lighter than a Fender Champ. As usual, all that really matters is using the right technology for the right job. On a recent project, the only way to get one sound I wanted was to put a dynamic mic in front of an amp. Yet the only way to get the *other* sound I craved was with a plug-in. Plug-in amps may never replace real amps, but they *do* offer tons of new possibilities that beg to be exploited.

—CRAIG ANDERTON

SETUPS OF THE STARS Joan Jett



When Joan Jett joined the Runaways in 1976, she became one of the first women to break ground as a sneering, distortion-loving guitar player. She originally used a Gibson Les Paul, but soon tired of its weight and size. When Eric Carmen (of the Raspberries) gave her a smaller, lighter Gibson Melody Maker, the Les

Paul was history. However, Jett *did* salvage the Paul's somewhat rare Velvet Hammer "54" humbucker for use in her new 6-string. In 1984, Jett began to worry about damaging or losing her favorite guitar, so she parked it in her studio and reserved it for recording.

Shown here is the Melody Maker she now plays on the road—which was found in a pawnshop and fixed up like the original. The pickup was replaced with a Velvet Hammer, and Schaller tuning keys and an on/off switch were installed. Jett

also had Sadowsky Guitars in New York City refret the guitar with medium-jumbo wire (.103"x.047") and install a bone nut. The Melody Maker's neck is kept very straight, and the action is very even and not too low—which allows her rhythm attack to cut through without being attenuated or compressed by buzz. The distance from the bottom of the strings to the 12th fret is $\frac{3}{32}$ ", and string height at the 1st fret is .020". Jett's favorite strings are Dean Markley .010-.046 sets.

—GARY BRAWER, brawer.com

FRETWIRE

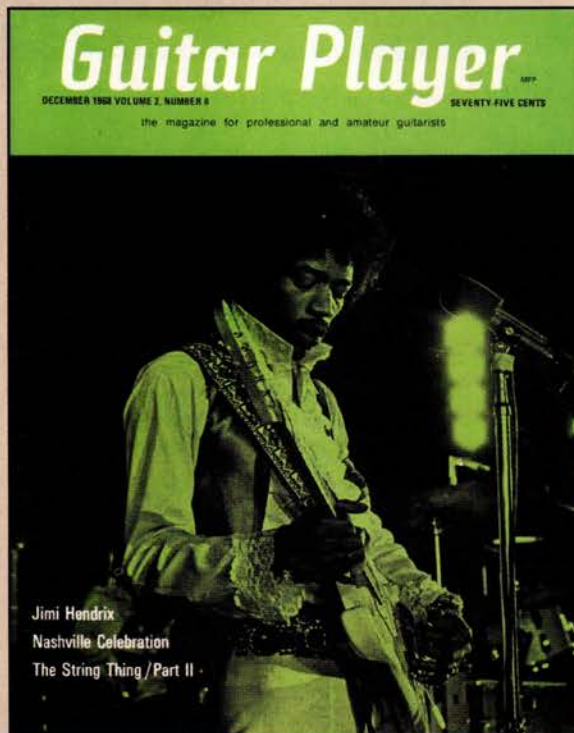
Dio guitarist Craig Goldy—the player behind Dio classics *Dream Evil* and *Magica*—has left the band due to family commitments. Taking the guitar helm is Doug Aldrich, who has worked with Hurricane and Lion. Aldrich also appears on the Dio album due out this spring on Spitfire Records.

DIRECT ACCESS: Beginning on March 15, **Reverend Musical Instruments** began offering its line of guitars, amps, and effects factory direct, which purportedly allows them to offer substantially lower prices and better customer service. Orders can be placed via phone at (810) 775-1025, or at reverenddirect.com.

FIT FOR A QUEEN: Paul McCartney and Eric Clapton will be among those on hand for the Queen of England's Golden Jubilee concert. To be held on June 3 under the creative direction of Beatles producer Sir George Martin, the Jubilee will be the first public performance held in the Buckingham Palace Gardens. The Jubilee will also include a classical music concert on June 1, as well as performances by **Brian Wilson, Phil Collins, Aretha Franklin, and Tom Jones**. Approximately 12,000 tickets will be distributed via telephone lottery, with a portion of the proceeds going to the Queen's designated charities.

—EMILY FASTEN

MY FAVORITE GUITAR PLAYER Eric Johnson



"The first issue of *Guitar Player* I ever saw was the one that blew my mind the most," remembers Eric Johnson. "I was in my high school library in late 1969, and I saw this green magazine cover with Jimi Hendrix on it [the December 1968 issue]. I just

lost my mind! I was freaked out because Hendrix was on the cover, and because I'd discovered a magazine just for guitarists. At the time, there was no magazine called guitar *anything*, and I thought it was incredible that this magazine talked about guitarists and how they create their music.

"I had been a fan of Hendrix for a couple of years by then, but I don't think I'd ever read anything about him that wasn't just stuff about his career. With *Guitar Player*, I learned about what kinds of picks and strings he used, and things such as how he liked his action high—it was a real insider's viewpoint. I checked out the issue, read it cover to cover, and sent in the sub-

scription card. Then I started fooling around with Fender guitars, using those same strings, and experimenting with a higher action. I was trying to create my own chemistry, so I took everything I read about him in that issue into my big picture of music."

—ERIC JOHNSON, MARCH, 2002

AUCTION BLOCK Will Ray's Ebay Strategies

AUCTION ITEM: Early '60s Danelectro Convertible (no case) WINNING BID: \$171.01

When I'm not playing with the Hellectasters, I spend way too much time buying and selling guitars on Ebay. In this Ebay auction, the guitar was listed as a "Nelectro" because the letters "Da" had rubbed off the headstock. The seller probably wasn't a musician, which is why I won the auction so cheap—these Danos typically go for \$350 to \$650.

On Ebay, you can specify a "maximum bid,"

but that doesn't mean you'll pay that price. The item goes for the highest bid posted when the auction ends. My maximum for the Nelectro was \$226.51. Why such an odd amount? Well, I find most people bid in multiples of \$25, and I always bid one or two bucks above those amounts. The same with the 51 cents—a lot of people will bid an amount plus fifty cents, and there have been several instances where I've actually won an auction

CLASSIC RIFFS

Vernon Reid on "Cult of Personality"

Vernon Reid's cross-pollination of heavy rock, funk, and acid jazz on Living Colour's 1988 hit "Cult of Personality" propelled the New York band into stardom, and helped restore ethnic and stylistic diversity to what was a very homogenized rock scene.

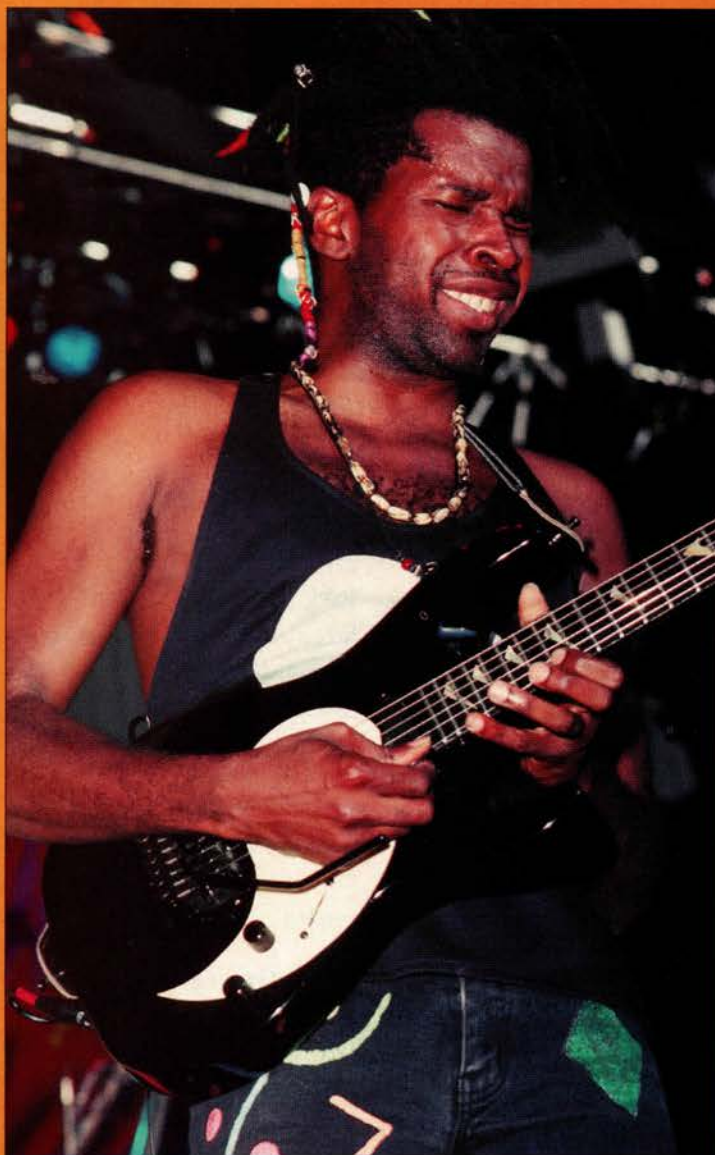
"We were rehearsing at a loft in the heart of Brooklyn, and Cory [Glover, Living Colour vocalist] started singing this melody," recalls Reid. "I was trying to play his part when I stumbled on the root-♭7-5-6 line that became the main riff. I knew right away we had something special. I played it again, and asked Will [Calhoun, drummer] to play a steady rock beat behind it. Then I had Muzzy [Skillings, original LC bassist] play the line with me, and we just locked into it. Soon after, I started playing the descending triads that became the chorus. However, the final arrangement didn't come together until we started working with producer Ed Stasium on our debut album, *Vivid*. Before that, we played 'Cult' almost the opposite way—we used the chorus chords for the intro, and then we went into the riff. But when we went into the studio, Ed said, 'Man, you've got to put that riff up front!'"

Reid's raging solo on the song was as spontaneous as its sounds. "We had tracked rhythm guitars all day, and Ed said, 'Let's come back tomorrow for the solo.' I said, 'Nope, I want to do one right now.' The second take is the one we kept."

To record the blockbuster hit, Reid used a Vox AC30 and three amp heads (a Dean Markley CD-120, a Fender Dual Showman, and a Marshall JCM800) driving Electro-Voice-loaded cabs. The guitar was his prized green-swirl ESP with EMG pickups (two single-coils and a humbucker) and a Floyd Rose tremolo. His only effect was an original ProCo Rat distortion pedal.

Even though "Cult of Personality" is, by far, the band's most famous song, Reid never tires of performing it. "Artists are funny," he says, "and they can be really resentful of the song that got them where they are. I've never felt that way about 'Cult of Personality.' I always thought, 'Man, it would have been great to be there when P-Funk, Led Zeppelin, or the Sex Pistols were laying down these huge songs.' Thanks to 'Cult,' I have a glimpse of what that's like."

—SHAWN HAMMOND



"I'm really grateful the muse visited us that day in the ghetto," says Vernon Reid of the charmed rehearsal that generated Living Colour's breakthrough hit. "It was like a channel opened up and everything just fell into place."

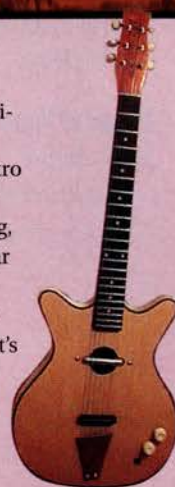
by one cent. In this particular case, the next highest bidder to me had posted \$166.01 just before the auction ended. Because I had posed a maximum of \$226.51, my bid automatically went to the next highest \$5 increment, and I won the guitar for \$171.01.

Also, I'm what's called a "sniper"—I wait until the very last moment of an auction to place my bid. Otherwise, I'm just helping to bid up the price as the auction progresses. In this case, the auction ended at 17:49:27, and I placed my bid at 17:49:10. (I like to place my bid approximately 20 seconds before the auction closes—I have a stopwatch and I'm not afraid to use it!)



The total cost for this guitar was \$223.96. It cost \$12.95 to have the guitar shipped via USPS Priority Mail, and another \$40 to have my tech do some minor repairs. So how does the Nelectro play? Great! I'm a big fan of old Dano Convertibles. I own three, and, when recording, I frequently put a mic directly on the guitar to get a sound somewhere between an acoustic guitar and a dobro. I keep a set of GHS Super Steel .010s on the Nelectro, and it's one of the funnest guitars I've ever owned.

Will Ray can be contacted at willr@hellecasters.tv. Be sure to check out his new solo CD, *Mojo Blues* [Wild Rose Records].



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- Metal distortion multi-modeling via exclusive Distortion Morph knob
- Spectral contouring equalization

Tone Driver™ Overdrive Distortion

- Overdrive multi-modeling via exclusive Distortion Morph knob
- Spectral contouring equalization

Turbo Flange™ Stereo Flanger

- Seven different flange types
- Triggering and step capability





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New Gear

By Emily Fasten



MACKIE

The DFX-6 mixer (\$379) is designed for the gigging musician who doesn't have a front-of-house sound technician. The knobs are all color coded, the jack field is top mounted, and there are level set and overload LEDs for each channel. It includes Mackie's 32-bit EMAC digital effects processor with 16 effects, a 5-band stereo equalizer, a vocal eliminator for karaoke use, balanced/unbalanced XLR and 1/4" main stereo outputs, and a built-in power supply. **Mackie Designs, Inc.**, 16220 Wood-Red Rd. N.E., Woodinville, WA 98072; (425) 487-4333; mackie.com.



1. FRAMUS

The Cobra (\$2,999) is a 100-watt, handwired tube head with three independent channels—clean, crunch, and lead. The clean channel features a bright switch, and both the crunch and lead channels have a notch switch to customize EQ settings. The Cobra also offers a parallel effects loop, an integrated MIDI interface, and a 4/8/16 Ω selector switch. **Framus**, dist. by Dana B. Goods, 4054 Transport St., Ventura, CA 93003; (805) 644-6621; framus.com.

2. LIZARD SPIT

Lizard Spit Guitar Polish (\$5.95) is designed to keep dust, fingerprints, and residue build-up from fine finishes. The Fretboard Conditioner (\$5.95) aids in cleaning and preventing warping without resulting in scum build-up or damage to porous wood. **Lizard Spit**, Box 5411, N. Muskegon, MI 49445; (231) 578-6000; lizard-spit.com.



3. C. HALL

The PME-J (\$5,500) is a small jazz archtop that, like all C.

Hall guitars, has no plastic parts. The pickup surrounds, pickguard, cover plates, knobs, and binding are all made of wood. The PME-J shown here has quilted-maple back, sides, and neck, and a quilted-cherry top (spruce is also available). The PME-J's pickups were originally designed by Lace Music Products for James D'Aquisto shortly before his death in 1995, but were shelved for nearly seven years before Charlie Hall unveiled them at the 2002 Winter NAMM show. **C. Hall Guitars**, Box 6090, Pine Mountain Club, CA 93222; (661) 242-9650; challguitars.com.

4. FISHMAN

The Neo-D (\$99) single-coil soundhole pickup uses the same neodymium magnets and coil technology as Fishman's Rare Earth pickup, but employs a passive design. It comes with an injected-molded shell and a 10" cable, and it stays in place using cork-lined clamps. **Fishman**, 340-D Fordham Rd., Wilmington, MA 01887; (978) 988-9199; fishman.com.



5. VEILLETTE

The semi-solid Mark IV Gryphon (\$1,980; \$2,280 with additional Seymour Duncan pickup) is a 12-string acoustic/electric that's tuned and fingered like a guitar, but offers the upper range of a mandolin and the lower end of a mandola. Handmade by Joe Veillette, the Gryphon features a short scale (18.5"), 21 frets, a poplar body, a figured-maple top, and a rock-maple neck. Appointments include Gotoh tuners, a piezo-equipped bridge, and an Alvarez System 500A preamp with active 3-band EQ, midrange contour, and volume controls. Color choices include black, amber, stone, or red. Gig bag included. **Veillette Guitars**, 2628 Rte. 212, Woodstock, NY 12498; (845) 679-6154; veilletteguitars.com.





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6. AIRCRAFT

Aircraft Amps' first model, the Atomic 20 (\$1,999), is a hand-built, 20-watt amp with a v-shaped cabinet front for improving sound projection. It has a pair of EL84 output tubes, high- and low-gain switching, independent gain and volume controls, 3-band EQ, and a custom Eminence speaker. **Aircraft Amplification**, 4804 Laurel Canyon Blvd., Ste. 264, Valley Village, CA 91607; (215) 913-0783; aircraftamps.com.



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7. BRUBAKER

The K-4 Xtreme (\$7,500) has a mahogany body with a quilted-maple top, a quartersawn hard-maple neck, and an ebony fretboard. Other features include a Point Technologies chrome tremolo, Sperzel locking tuners, and a choice of Seymour Duncan (pictured), Bartolini, or Lindy Fralin humbuckers. Controls include a master volume, tone knobs, and a 3-way selector switch. Hardshell case included. **Brubaker Guitars**, 900-A Leidy Rd., Westminster, MD 21157; (410) 857-7600; brubakerguitars.com.

8. TACOMA

Tacoma's new Amazon (\$5,800) was designed in conjunction with luthier Ed Ro-



TECH 21

The all-analog Trademark 200 (\$845) is a footswitchable, 3-channel, 200-watt head that uses Tech 21's proprietary SansAmp technology. Each channel has an independent 3-band active EQ, three voicing options (California, British, and Tweed), and independent drive and level controls. Other features include a boost function (up to 9dB), an XLR direct out, a series effects loop, a parallel effects loop with mix control, a buffered tuner output, and parallel speaker outputs. The footswitch is included, and an optional rack-mount kit is available. **Tech 21, Inc.**, 333 West 52nd St., New York, NY 10019; (212) 315-1116; tech21nyc.com.



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man, and features Brazilian-rosewood back and sides, a red-cedar top, and an ebony fingerboard and bridge. The rosette, Acanthus-leaf fretboard inlays, and logo are all of abalone, and the guitar also sports gold tuners, tortoise body binding, and a 1 3/4" nut width. **Ed Roman Guitars**, 155 Shortwoods Rd., New Fairfield, CT 06812; (203) 746-4995; edromanguitars.com.

9. ROCCA FORTE

The Levant series Hi-Gain 100 (\$2,695) is a single-channel, 100-watt head with point-to-point wiring and custom-wound transformers. Its four-stage preamp uses three 12AX7s and can be ad-

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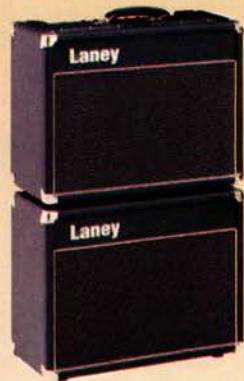
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Rye Coalition

Back to Basics

By Matt Blackett

Our music is just loud hard rock," says Rye Coalition guitarist Jon Gonnelli. "It's fun to play and exciting to watch."

"I grew up on Led Zeppelin, Guns N' Roses, and Motley Crue," adds co-guitarist Herb Wiley. "And that's the kind of energy I try to bring to the band."

The heavy, raucous assault of Rye's latest album, *On Top* [Tiger Style], certainly embraces the influences of Gonnelli and Wiley, but it took a conscious commitment between the band and producer Steve Albini (who has worked

"It was amazing working with Steve [Albini]," says Wiley (left, Gonnelli is right), "because he didn't try to change us. He just let us go."

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Rye Coalition

with everyone from Nirvana to Page & Plant) to capture the group's raw energy in the studio.

"*On Top* is exactly how we sound live," says Gonnelli, "because that's how we recorded it. The last album sounded as if we were playing in little boxes because too many parts were recorded separately."

Aside from a few solos, Gonnelli and Wiley put everything down while tracking basic tracks—including the harmonized leads in "Vacations" and "Born a Monkey in the Year of the Snake." Another component of the album's live vibe is that the guitarists are typically panned to different sides of the stereo spectrum.

"It was important that each guitar have its own identity," explains Gonnelli, "and the easiest way to do that was to pan us hard left and right—just like you'd hear us at a gig."

To record *On Top*, Wiley plugged a '58 reissue Les Paul into an Orange OR120 head and Marshall 4x12. Gonnelli played an aluminum-bodied Flexx guitar from Germany. ("It's shaped like a Tele and has a Seymour Duncan Hot Rails pickup," he says. "It's bright and abrasive.") To power his Flexx, Gonnelli employed a '70s-era Marshall Super Lead and an Orange OR120.

Although both guitarists kept effects to a minimum—"We mostly stick to the natural gain of

"We want our guitar tones to be dirty, but *naturally* dirty."

— JON GONNELLI

the amps," insists Wiley—Gonnelli brought out some of his favorite pedals for the solo to "Stairway to the Freebird on the Way to the Smokey Water."

"I wanted to give each phrase its own character," he says, "so I added a different effect for each part. First there's an Electro-Harmonix Small Stone, then a Big Muff, and finally a wah. The changing effects help the solo build."

Wiley cut the solo on the minor-blues tune "Freshly Frankness" with a more straight-ahead tone. "That was an overdub, but I did it in one take," he says. "I didn't run the gain on my amp too high because it can get a little messy. Our guitars mesh better if I run mine a little cleaner. I love those contrasts. They not only hold my interest, but they also keep the listener interested. Jimmy Page put all these contrasting parts and tones down on *Led Zeppelin II*, and that's why that record caught my attention at such a young age and inspired me to play."

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After a fierce Civil War battle in St. Petersburg, FL, Chuck Crouse entertains comrades by playing his Martin D-15. Chuck likes knowing that Martins were cheering soldiers this way in the 1860s.

"I was a rock band vocalist in the '60s, and played bass. One day I picked up a guitar and began to play folk music. I wanted a Martin, but they were beyond me.

"Then I got married and went on a musical hiatus. But recently in a store I spotted a mahogany-top Martin—Woody Guthrie's choice, even after he'd made it and could have afforded a more expensive model. For me it was love at first sight. I went into shock to see the low price—well under a thousand dollars. There was that Martin craftsmanship, playability—and beautiful tone. I walked out with it!

"My hobby is Civil War reenacting and I proudly serve with the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment. After a battle we settle by our tents, and I haul out my Martin. That D-15 has a clean, simple look that fits in with the 1860s. Martins were at campgrounds then, soothing souls after *real* battles. I like that.

"I'm not a professional musician, but I sure appreciate a fine musical instrument. And with the D-15, even a hack player like me can play a guitar I feel is every bit a Martin."—**Chuck Crouse, Orlando, FL**

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Waylon Jennings

Requiem for an Outlaw

By Matt Blackett

W did it my way." We associate this lyric with Frank Sinatra, but it describes the career of Waylon Jennings more fittingly. When Jennings passed away on Feb. 13, 2002, he left a legacy of classic songs, hit records, and great guitar playing, but he will be best remembered as a rebel—a man who bucked every trend the fickle music business threw at him, yet succeeded every

"As far back as I can remember," said Jennings in 1984, "I've been intrigued by guitar. I love the sound. You can't get me enough guitar sounds."

Waylon Jennings

step of the way.

Jennings was born in 1937 in Littlefield, Texas, and was singing and playing a nylon-string Stella by age ten. After cutting his teeth on the folk and country music of the day—songs by Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, and Ernest Tubb—Jennings found inspiration in blues artists such as Bobby “Blue” Bland and B.B. King. He fronted his own band by the time he was 13, and worked as a disc jockey at 14.

While still a teenager, Jennings met Buddy Holly, who would produce Jennings’ first record, and later hire him as a bassist. (On the infamous flight that claimed the lives of Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper, Jennings gave up his plane seat to the Bopper.)

After Holly’s death, Jennings relocated to Phoenix, Arizona, where he honed his guitar and vocal chops and began developing his unique fan base—a broad cross-section of music lovers that would sustain his career until his death. (“We got long-haired people, lawyers, doctors, and all the cowboys,” Jennings once said.) It was in Phoenix that Jennings would acquire (and cover with leather) his trademark ’63 Telecaster. As his reputation grew, so did interest from record labels. After a brief and unsatisfying tenure at A&M Records, Chet Atkins signed Jennings to RCA in 1965.

“I played Buddy Holly’s guitar some,” said Jennings, “but I never liked Strats. They got too many knobs.”

The list of accomplishments and milestones in Jennings’ career is so long it’s hardly possible to recount them all. He released more than 70 albums under his own name, plus countless collaborations and guest spots. He scored eight consecutive gold records, and released the first-ever platinum album recorded in Nashville (1976’s *Wanted: The Outlaws*). The following year, he put out *Ol’ Waylon*, the first country album by a solo artist to achieve platinum status. In the ’80s, he struck gold by teaming with like-minded friends Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, and Kris Kristofferson to form the Highwaymen. (And, although his fellow Highwaymen have garnered more acclaim as songwriters, Jennings’ tunes have been covered by everyone from Dean Martin to Tina Turner, and Elvis Presley to Elvis Costello.) In 1996, he further cemented his street cred and crossover appeal when he opened for Metallica on the Lollapalooza tour.

Jennings’ legend grew to such immense proportions over the course of his career that it consistently overshadowed his guitar playing, but his gritty Tele licks graced his own records, as well as those by Johnny Cash, Emmylou Harris, Hank Williams, Jr., Ernest Tubb, Willie Nelson, and dozens of others. With a style that incorporated Buddy Holly-style rhythms, popping single-note lines, and faux pedal-steel bends, Jennings carved out a unique country-guitar niche, and showcased it on hits like “Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way,” “Luckenbach, Texas,” and “I’m a Ramblin’ Man.”

“I’m a rhythm player, and I like that because I think rhythm players are the most important thing in the band,” Jennings told *GP* in January 1984. “I only learned to play lead in self-defense.”

Jennings received numerous awards over the years, the most recent being his induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame. His son accepted the award on his behalf as Jennings—in true outlaw fashion—claimed the induction meant “absolutely nothing,” and that he would rather play his music than accept awards for it.

If there was one thing, however, that solidified Jennings’ rebel status over the years, it was his refusal to succumb to Nashville’s pressure to record with studio musicians. He always insisted that he and his road band play on his records. “No disrespect to the session players,” he told *GP*. “They’re great. But I work in a different way, and I have to do things *my way*.” ■

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By Art Thompson

Yugoslavia may seem an unlikely place to spawn a fresh blues talent, but watch out for Belgrade-born Ana Popovic. On her potent blues-rock debut, *hush!* [Ruf], the 25-year-old Popovic proves she's not only a talented songwriter with a sultry, Chrissie Hynde-inflected voice, but also a formidable player with a fierce lead style, deep slide chops, and a solid grasp of jazz.

"I've always enjoyed combining blues and jazz," says Popovic. "I love John Scofield and Robben Ford, and I'm fascinated by

Ana Popovic

East-Bloc Blues Rocker

"I love old school blues," says Popovic, "but I love the new stuff too. My favorite slide players are Elmore James and Sonny Landreth."

Ana Popovic

people who can play from the heart. When you hear Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jimi Hendrix, and Jeff Beck play, you really hear them speaking from inside."

Inspired as a child by her father's blues records—particularly those by Elmore James—Popovic took up slide guitar at 15. She played her first club gig at 18, plied the Belgrade blues scene for a couple of years, and then moved to Holland to study composition and jazz. During a trip to Germany to perform with a friend's band, Popovic met guitarist Bernard Allison (son of the late Luther Allison), who steered

her to signing with Germany's Ruf Records.

"[Label owner] Thomas Ruf asked me if I had some original songs," says Popovic, "and I said, 'Of course'—which was a big lie, because I didn't have any songs at all. He told me he'd see me in two months to hear my demos, so I went straight back home, locked my door, and started writing. I wound up with the six originals that appear on the album."

Popovic's fortune didn't end with being signed to a popular European label. Ruf also enlisted legendary American producer Jim Gaines to oversee Popovic's album—which was recorded in Memphis, Tennessee.

"Having Jim produce my album was incred-

ible because I grew up listening to the records he made with Stevie Ray Vaughan, Carlos Santana, and others," says Popovic. "I didn't think he'd pay much attention to the demos I sent him, but when I got to Memphis, he was well prepared. He had a drummer for the rock and blues songs, and another for the jazzier stuff. There was also a girl to help me with my English lyrics, and the band—which had played with Albert Collins and Isaac Hayes—was absolutely great. In Europe, you have to teach producers what is cool—or not cool—for blues, but with a guy like Jim, you can just relax and play your guitar."

Popovic also credits Gaines for helping her create the album's smoking guitar tones. "I only brought my Fender '57 reissue Strat to the sessions, but there were a lot of great amps, guitars, and pedals in the studio that I could use," she says. "I ran my guitar through a Super Reverb on 'Minute 'Till Dawn,' and I used an old Gibson short-scale guitar for slide on 'Hometown' and my version of Tom Waits' 'Downtown.' That was the first time I used a Line 6 Delay Modeler on my slide parts, and I loved the analog delay and Echoplex sounds. Some songs were recorded using an old Fender Bassman, some with the Super Reverb, and some were tracked with both. I don't play well unless I'm comfortable with my tone, and Jim helped me a lot by hooking up different sounds and effects for each song."

Popovic uses standard tuning for slide, and strings her guitars with .011-.046 sets. Onstage, she plays through a Fender Vibro-King combo, and uses an Ibanez Tube Screamer and a Roger Mayer Voodoo 1 to get her gutsy lead sound.

"I keep the amp clean and get distortion from pedals," says Popovic. "I tried turning the Vibro-King way up once, and I blew a speaker, so now I keep the volume at about three and a half. If we're playing on a big stage, I'll add my '65 Marshall and a 4x12 cabinet. I get a lot of extra bottom with the Marshall and the Vibro-King—it's a great combination."

Given Popovic's impressive 6-string skills, it's surprising to hear that playing guitar didn't come easy. "It took me quite some time to learn how to play lead, because I had this idea that it was really difficult for women," she recounts. "A lot of girls get stuck on the chords, and have a difficult time going into solos—I don't know why that is. When I was growing up, there weren't many women playing electric guitar in Belgrade—or the rest of Europe, for that matter. And when I was studying at the conservatory in Holland, I was the only woman. Some people still have an attitude about female guitarists, and I don't like it when they say, 'She plays good for a girl.' I've had the opportunity to share stages with players such as Bernard Allison and Kenny Neal, and I don't want to feel like I'm there just because I'm a girl who can hold a guitar."

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Peter Lang

Acoustic Reanimator

By Shawn Hammond

From 1972 to 1978, Peter Lang was one of the premier "American Primitive" artists on the late John Fahey's Takoma Records. But after releasing three instrumental acoustic albums and appearing on 1974's *John Fahey/Peter Lang/Léo Kottke*—which rose to the top of Billboard's FM radio chart—Lang suddenly called it quits, became an executive producer for animated films, and didn't do any serious guitar playing for the next 24 years. But now Lang has returned to the guitar fold with *Dharma Blues* [Horus]—an album that displays his

"I was intimidated by John Fahey when I first signed to Takoma," recalls Lang. "He owned the company and had made all these great records. I said, 'I'm just a toad on the road to Jesus.' But John answered, 'Well, you're one of these new, young, fast guitar players. I'll overlook that, if you overlook the stuff about me.'"

Peter Lang

fragile fingerpicking, vicious slide work, and an uncanny ability to mix virtuosic technique with tenderness and soul.

What led to Lang's extended hiatus? "Basically, I learned firsthand that there can be a lot of heartbreak in this industry—it's a business that eats its young," he says. "Disco got big, tour venues were evaporating, and free-format radio was dying out. I also promised my then-wife that I'd throw in the towel if things didn't take off after we'd been married five years."

But for Lang, playing guitar was never about money. "Music saved my life—that's the bottom line," he says. "When I was a child, it

**"Playing guitar
is my way of
howling at the
moon," says Lang.**

was a way to escape the crazy things happening around me. Later, when I was in therapy, I discovered that music is really a way to process, because songs have a safe entry point and a safe exit point. That explained why I'd often have very emotional reactions when I

wrote songs—to the point of tears. Writing was a huge release."

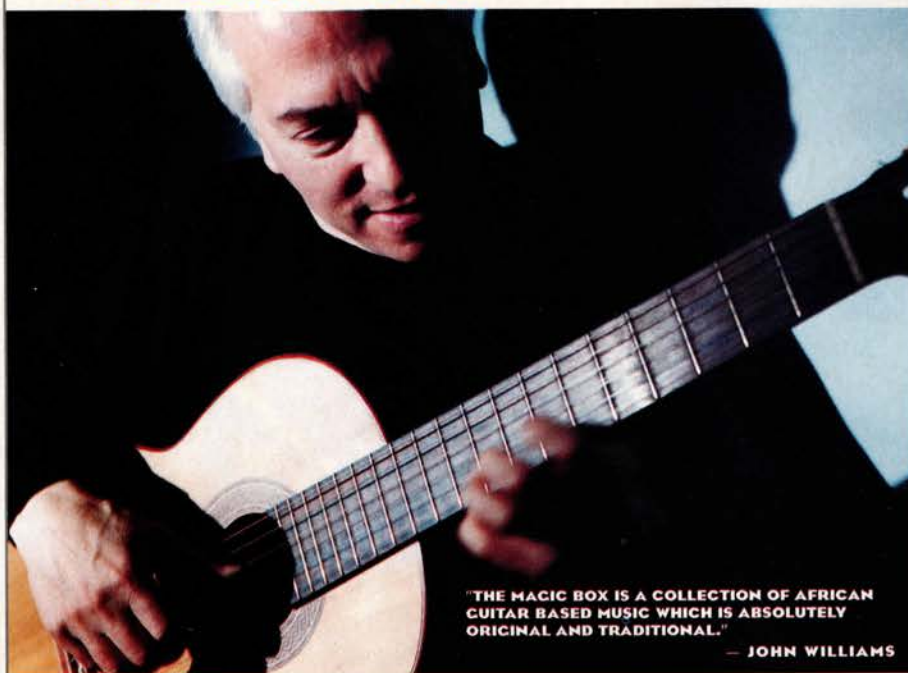
Ironically, tragedy and heartbreak were what got Lang *back* into guitar in 1998. In the early '90s, a series of catastrophes involving family members and close friends brought him to the breaking point. "I felt kind of like Captain Dan from *Forrest Gump*, reeling in the wind at the top of a shrimp-boat mast," he says. "I promised myself that if I made it through the maelstrom I'd make this album—partly to reclaim my life, and partly just to see if I could do it. I took a six-month sabbatical to record it, and that stretched into two years."

Lang's main guitars for *Dharma Blues* were an early-'60s Epiphone 12-string (which he uses for delicate passages such as those in "Thicker Than Wicker") and a 12-string built by Bozo Podunavac ("It just *howls*, so I use it for slide pieces and edgy stuff"). He also used several 6-strings, including an old Gibson Hummingbird, a National Resophonic (for "Poor Boy/Guitar Rag"), an Ibanez Artwood, a Yamaha classical, a 1932 Martin 000-18, and a Gibson GI model that was originally sold in military canteens during World War II ("It's a nice little slide guitar").

Growing up in Minnesota, Lang was influenced by everyone from Big Bill Broonzy, Elizabeth Cotton, and Rev. Gary Davis to Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, and John McLaughlin. But when he signed with Takoma and began working with Fahey in the label's office, he also picked up plenty of playing tips from the acoustic pioneer. "John dramatically changed my imprint of what music is," Lang recalls. "When I played him my demo tape, he said, 'You seem to think of everything in three-minute segments, and you have this really *square* picking style—everything is so clean and uniform. You're just working in the triad, and that can be real boring—it makes a lot of your songs sound alike. You should explore dissonance, use space to open things up, and break out of the *stanza*, *chorus*, *stanza*, *chorus* stuff.' But I guess the biggest thing I got from John was the realization that silence is a huge part of music."

In the three decades since that conversation, Lang has done a lot of reflecting on his playing. "I listen back to my first album, *The Thing at the Nursery Room Window*, and I'm proud of it, but I feel like I gave up something for technique," he admits. "If I could do it again, I'd slow it down and add more emotion. On the new album, some of the songs aren't technically perfect—there are string buzzes here and there—but they have a real good feel. I just kept reminding myself that some of the early Motown producers would tell bands to play a cut again if they weren't stretching far enough for *somebody* to make a mistake. So I tried to reach a little farther into the performance and not be such a slave to technique."

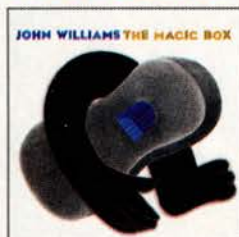
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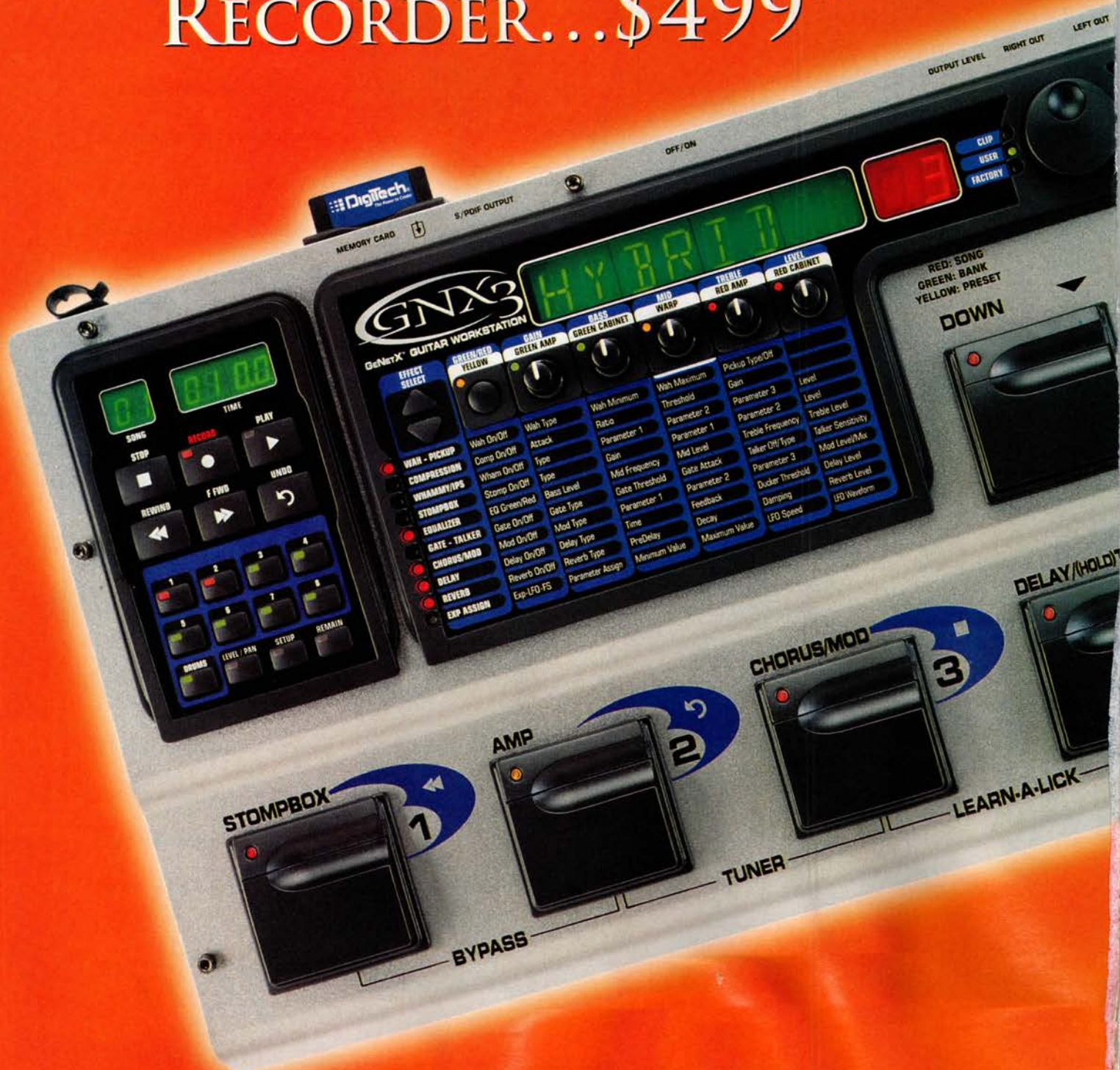
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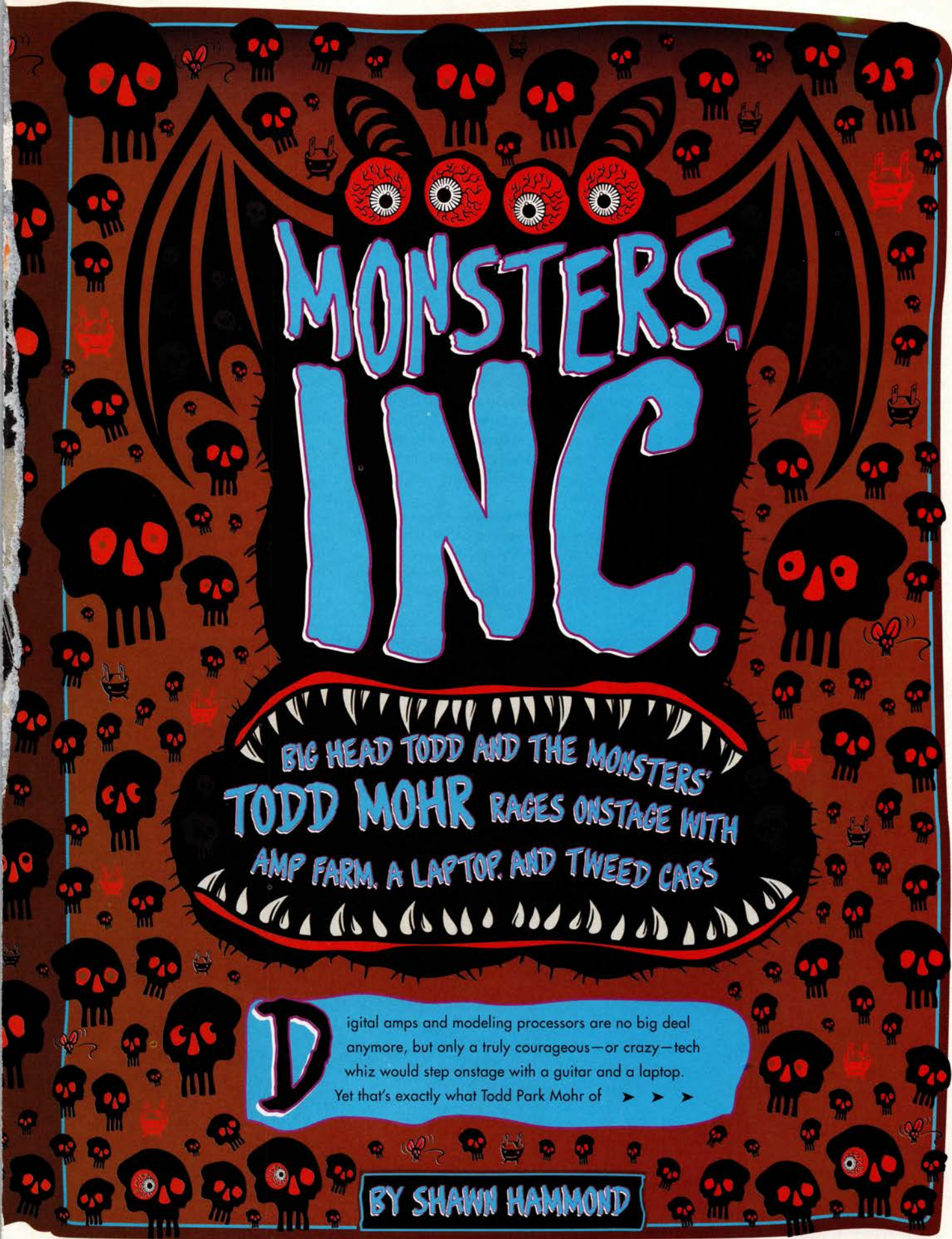
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"Guitars are just like people," jokes Todd Mohr. "Some suck, and some don't."



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BIG HEAD TODD AND THE MONSTERS
TODD MOHR RAGES ONSTAGE WITH
AMP FARM, A LAPTOP, AND TWEED CABS

D

igital amps and modeling processors are no big deal anymore, but only a truly courageous—or crazy—tech whiz would step onstage with a guitar and a laptop. Yet that's exactly what Todd Park Mohr of > > >

BY SHAWN HAMMOND



underground blues/pop sensations Big Head Todd and the Monsters is doing on the road in support of *Riviera* [Big].

"I have a love/hate relationship with tube amps," offers Mohr, who admitted in the February '95 *GP* to switching amp rigs every few months because he couldn't find a setup that did more than one thing well. "But I still consider myself a traditional guy when it comes to tone."

While recording *Riviera*, Mohr conceived that the right computer rig and software plug-ins could help him recreate the album's lush and diverse guitar tones on tour—as well as deliver the flexibility he had been attempting to get with conventional amp setups. So with a Mac G4 powerbook, Pro Tools, Line 6's Amp Farm, and a few effects plug-ins and outboard processors, Mohr is bringing virtual guitar to the concert hall.



How did you get into using Amp Farm?

I've always been a tube-amp guy, but I love the idea behind the Line 6 Pod—even though its blackface Deluxe Reverb model is the only sound I really like. The sound and flexibility of modeling units is appealing at first, but I get tired of them really quick because the tones are too one-dimensional. For *Riviera*, I primarily used a 100-watt Mesa/Boogie Nomad head driving 4x12 cabs. But after I'd recorded all the guitar parts, Karl Derfler—who mixed the album—introduced me to Amp Farm. I ended up liking it so much that I ran all the guitar tracks I had already recorded with an amp through it.

Why?

Amp Farm adds tons of life—it accentuates everything. As soon as I heard how good it sounded, I said, "Karl, how can I use this on the road?" My version of Amp Farm was modified by Karl and a guy at Line 6, and it sounds extremely open and beautiful. It's a lot more three-dimensional in terms of dynamics and low end resolution.

Which Amp Farm models are you using?

I use an eight-input GCX MIDI switcher to switch between sounds, and I can only afford to use four of the inputs for Amp Farm. That limits me to four basic models: a Vox top

boost, a JTM 45, a Marshall plexi, and a blackface Deluxe Reverb. But I have several presets with different gain and EQ settings for each of those four models.

Why not just use a multi-amp rig?

To be honest, I've never had that luxury—from a financial *or* manpower standpoint. The laptop setup is much simpler, and I love the level of control and consistency that Amp Farm offers. It's a lot easier to just recall a preset—especially from a soundman's perspective—than to setup and deal with a bunch of amps. Also, Pro Tools gives me access to effects plug-ins that generate sounds you just can't get from standard gear. For example, I use Waves' Enigma for chorusing and phasing because it gives me control over tons of parameters such as minimum and maximum frequency, feedback depth, and oscillation. I'm also using Waves' Renaissance for reverb and Digidesign's Procrastinator for some crazy delay patterns.

What about the rest of your rig?

I'm using a Focusrite studio preamp and a Tube-Tech CL1B mono compressor for the front end, and then my signal goes into Amp Farm. I use a T.C. Electronic M2000 rack processor through an AES digital insert for chorusing, flanging, and phasing, and it sounds *really* nice—super clean. Then I use two Reamp units to route the Pro Tools output to a

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Do you think you're going to stick with your

"virtual" setup?

So far I love it. We did a gig in Hawaii, and all I had to do was fly my rack over. Everything sounded killer, even though we didn't get time for a soundcheck. I just turned it on and played!

You don't worry about the computer going down in the middle of a song?

Crashes are a concern, but I'm just playing through the software—I'm not recording anything or asking the computer processor to do any difficult editing or automation tricks. In that situation, Pro Tools is super stable.

If there is a crash, however, I can bypass the laptop and go straight into my outboard gear and the amp. The GCX switcher and my Ground Control Pro footswitch also controls an Ibanez

Tube Screamer, a Diaz Texas Tremodillo, a Bud-da wah, and a Line 6 Delay Modeler.

Did you discover any tonal tricks in the studio while you were recording Riviera?

Well, I like the waves of lows and low-mids that knock you over when you play in front of an amp, but you often lose that impact when you commit tones to tape. But we discovered a combination of room tone, mic selection, and mic placement that captured that low-end wallop.

First, we put the amps up in a loft where some pretty extreme corners trapped a lot of bass frequencies. Then we used two mics almost religiously: a Coles 4038 ribbon mic and a Neumann TLM 103. The Coles does something with the low end that's so nice, and the Neumann is accurate and very clean sounding.

Where did you place the mics?

The Coles can't handle the air movement that super-high volumes generate, so we usually placed them about a foot or more away from the cabinet. The Neumann was positioned right against the grille.

Did you use your favorite '62 Strat?

Actually, I used two Rarebird guitars for most of the record. They're made by Phillip Bruce Clay—a Denver luthier—and they're the finest guitars I've stumbled upon. My favorite is called the Dynohawk. It's basically a Strat-style guitar, but it looks like a combination between a Gibson Firebird and a Fender Musicmaster. It has an alder body, a set maple neck with a rosewood fretboard, a vintage-style tremolo, and Lindy Fralin single-coils.

The other guitar was a 12-string Osprey semi-hollowbody with a lacewood top and ash back, a multi-laminate rosewood/maple neck, an ebony fretboard, and Lace Sensor pickups. It sounds beautiful. I used it on "Secret Mission" and for the solo on "Again and Again." I also used a Rarebird Osprey Artist—which is basically Phillip's version of a Paul Reed Smith. It's a hard-tail with a figured-redwood top and EMG SA-Z pickups. All of the guitars have locking Gotoh tuners, and weigh around 4.5 lbs. I string them with Dean Markley .011-.048 sets, and use .88 mm Jim Dunlop picks.

How did the Rarebirds lure you away from your Strat?

They have a full, open sound that's still aggressive, and that kind of tone is hard to find these days.

How did you get the screaming, Hendrix-like sound for the "Freedom Fighter" solo?

That was the Dynohawk through a Boogie Nomad, but the key to that solo is my Budda Bud wah. The pedal has an amazing sweet spot, so I just left it there.

What did you use to record the album's acoustic parts?

A 1976 Martin D-35, a new Martin, and a Taylor 12-string.

You didn't release an album for five years



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because Giant Records wanted a hit—to the point where they sat on 35 of your songs until the label shut down, and you were released from your contract. Has that experience affected your songwriting?

No. I still think it's important to write what you feel. I consider songwriting my most important job, and I have things that I want to say. That's why I'm in this business.

Giant wanted me to co-write with guys like Tommy Simms—heavy-duty pop writers—and I just didn't have any interest in doing that. It's not that I'm against co-writing, but I think you should have *creative* reasons for doing it. "Let's make a hit record" is not a good motivation for making music.

What do you look for in a good song hook?

I usually know it's good if I can't forget it. In writing, you obviously come up with a lot of ideas, and the ones that are the most memorable are the most important.

Do you think of hooks as more of a guitar thing or a vocal thing?

I usually start with guitar. It's my native instrument, and it's easier for me to develop ideas with it. From there, I spend a lot of time on lyrics and melody. Like a car, a song has a lot of components, and the whole idea is for all those components to work together. I have the music for a lot of songs completely written, but I haven't found lyrics for them yet, so, I'll sit on them for a couple of years until all the components are on the table.

Does music theory play any part in your approach?

I have some interest in theory from the standpoint of composition, but, at the same time, I'm really intrigued by the Bob Dylan approach to songwriting, where you just play three chords—and they're simple chords that everyone can play—but somehow there's a song there that not everybody can write. That's a lot more difficult to pull off than any kind of technical virtuosity.

Do you ever use alternate voicings?

I try to find more unusual ways to present chords than the standard G, C, and D shapes. I prefer chords that involve the low E string, because we're a three-piece, and the more I can deliver in that area, the better. Also, a lot of times I use different tunings to facilitate more interesting chord textures. Like in "Universal Mom," I tune the sixth string to D and

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the third string to F#.

Who are your main guitar influences?

Albert King—followed closely by Albert Collins. I discovered Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix pretty late in life, but those guys—along with Stevie Ray Vaughan—were also big influences.

What was it about Albert King that fascinated you?

The way he bent notes had so much power—and so many overtones—that it just rattled your brain. Also, he didn't assemble complicated riffs. He'd only use four or five notes.

Did you spend a lot of time trying to emulate that style?

Yes, because bends and vibrato are key aspects of your own style.

What was it about Albert Collins that you dug?

He was just so freakin' wild. He'd combine the Albert King-style bends and vibrato, but he put a capo on the 5th fret and did all these crazy pull-offs—bend, bend, bend, pull-off, pull-off, pull-off. Even though I don't use a capo, I try to incorporate that style and emulate his wildness.

In which areas do you think current guitarists are commonly lacking?

Melody. It's challenging to create a part that functions as a melody. Many guitarists just end up playing scales because their hands tend to go to the same places all the time. I try to work out the melodic point of a solo so that it still makes sense if you whistle it. I do like frantic solos, but I strive for a golden mean between a focused melody and wildness.

What else do you do to keep solos interesting?

I like to bend a lot on the low strings when I solo—which I think is pretty unique. I'll bend the D string right off the fretboard!

What can today's players do to really push the envelope?

Well, a lot of guitarists aren't songwriters, but they need to be. Even if you're not writing the songs, every guitar solo is a melody, and the more compositional talent you can bring to it, the greater the odds of success. Aside from that, it's critically important to be yourself. What we need from musicians more than anything is authenticity.

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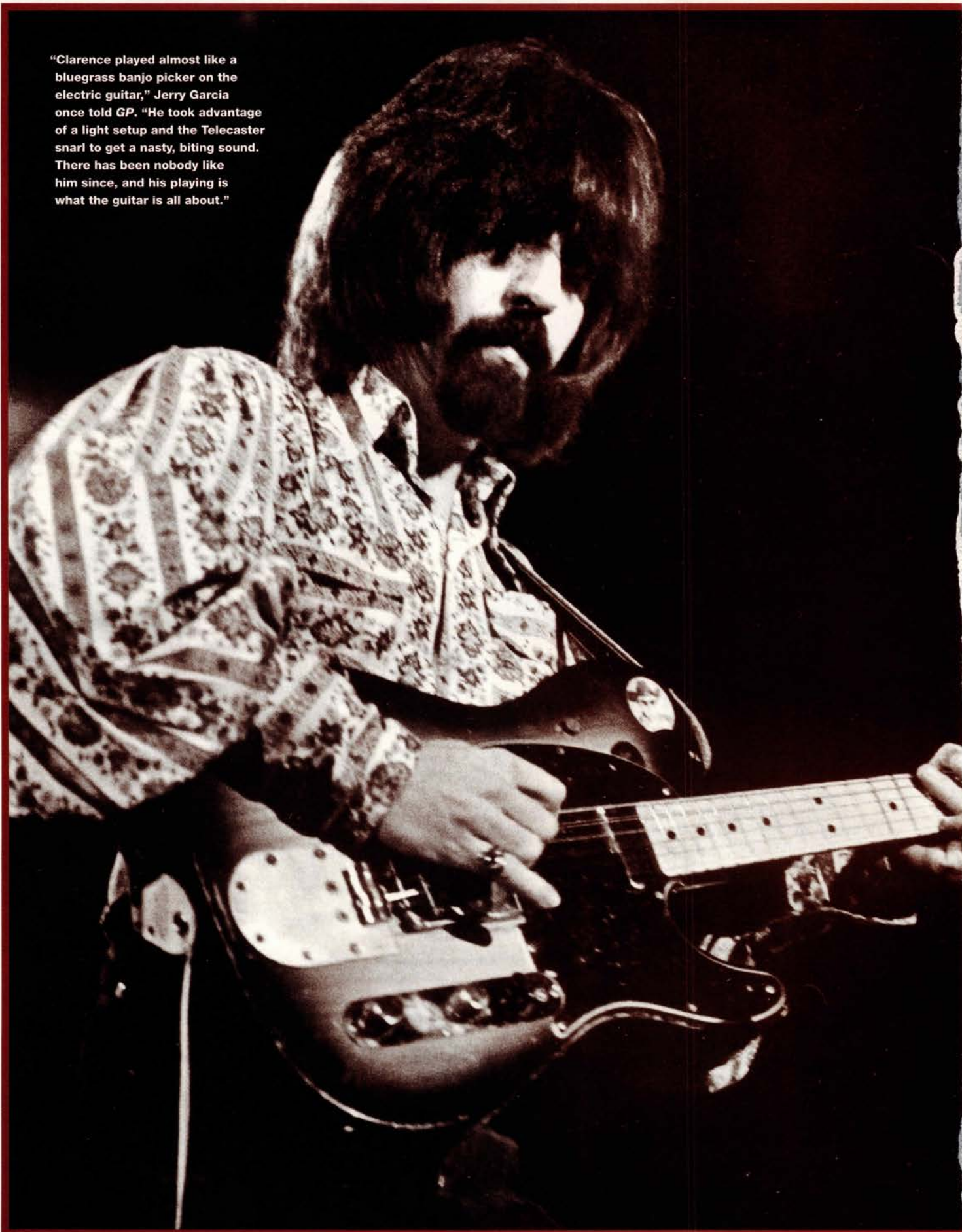
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"Clarence played almost like a bluegrass banjo picker on the electric guitar," Jerry Garcia once told *GP*. "He took advantage of a light setup and the Telecaster snarl to get a nasty, biting sound. There has been nobody like him since, and his playing is what the guitar is all about."



COWBOY ROCKERY

A pioneer of country-rock guitar, Clarence White introduced the Woodstock generation to the magic of a whining Tele through his groundbreaking work with the Byrds. He began his association with the L.A. band as a session player in the late '60s, adding spanky licks to *Younger Than Yesterday* ('67), *Notorious Byrd Brothers* ('68), and the cosmic *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* ('68). In 1968, he officially joined the Byrds, and remained a member until Roger McGuinn dissolved the band in 1973. That year, while loading out his gear

BY ANDY ELLIS

after a gig, White was killed by a drunk driver. > > >

**UNLOCK THE
SECRETS OF
CLARENCE
WHITE'S
SEARING
STRING BENDS**

COWBOY ROCKETRY

At the height of the flower-power era, the Byrds recorded two honky tonk shows at San Francisco's Fillmore West. For more than three decades, the tapes languished in a Columbia Records vault. Finally released in 2000 as *Live at the Fillmore—February '69*, this album reveals White at the peak of his game. His mind-blowing bends and snarling runs pay homage to James Burton and Jimmy Bryant—both of whom mentored White in the Los Angeles studio scene—while breaking new ground in *faux* pedal-steel picking.

In this lesson, we'll explore some of the heady bends and licks that White played on *Live at the Fillmore*. This is tricky stuff, and many of White's lines were accomplished with his Tele-

mounted Parsons/White StringBender—aka "B-bender"—a mechanism he developed with Byrds' drummer Gene Parsons that let White selectively raise his B string a whole-step to emulate the whine of a pedal-steel guitar.

While some of White's moves are impossible without a StringBender, with a little effort and ingenuity, you can adapt many of them to standard 6-string guitar. You'll need light strings (a .009 or .010 set), low action, and considerable determination, but, before long, you'll be able to amaze your friends with awesome, White-inspired string stretching. These licks are easiest to manage on a guitar with a fixed tailpiece—if you have a tremolo system, stationary notes may drift flat when you bend a string.

BEND AND HOLD

Inspired by the moaning licks in "Sing Me

Back Home," Ex. 1a illustrates an essential cowboy-rock technique. To create sonic drama, White would often bend a note and hold it while playing a series of higher ones. (This is a fancy variation of the *oblique* bend, in which you stretch one string while fretting another one or two.) In this instance, bend B a whole-step to C#, and then hold it for three-and-a-half beats while dancing back and forth on strings one and two. There are two considerations, here:

- Be sure you nail C#. If you land a little sharp or flat, the subsequent notes will sound sour. It's a good idea to practice this whole-step bend in isolation before hitching it to other notes. First fret the target tone to establish a pitch reference, then bend into it from two frets below. Repeat this process up and down the fretboard. (It can take days to heal pulled hand muscles, so always stop when your hand begins to tire, or your fingertips smart.)

Ex. 1a

(I)
A

♩ = 108-132

let ring
hold
B

T
A
B



Ex. 1b

(I)
A

(V)
E

♩ = 108-132

let ring
hold
B

T
A
B

Ex. 2

(IV)
D

(I)
A Asus4 A

♩ = 108-132

let ring
pre-B--R

T
A
B

Ex. 3a

(IV)
D

(I)
A

♩ = 96-126

let ring
pre-B--R

T
A
B

Ex. 3b

(IV)
D

(I)
A

let ring
pre-B--R

T
A
B

Ex. 3c

(IV)
D

(I)
A

let ring
pre-B--R

T
A
B

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• Don't allow the bent $C\sharp$ to droop—especially when you're executing beat three's pull-off. To help your 4th finger make that two-fret reach, park your fretting hand thumb behind the neck in the vicinity of the 12th fret.

White often launched his solos with the pickup notes that ramp into bar 1, so it's worth memorizing this gambit in *all* your favorite keys.

Ex. 1b proves how easy it is to repurpose a cool phrase by simply changing its final note. In the previous lick, you settled into A (the I chord) by tagging its root. But you can get a nice $A-E$ ($I-V$) transition when you end the same phrase on B , as shown here.

SILENT PRE-BENDS

The pre-bend is another bit of White magic. This technique relies exclusively on muscle memory—you have to *silently* stretch the string to its new pitch before you pluck it. Pre-bends have a high potential for “Whoops, I didn't mean to do *that*, folks,” but when you learn how to sneak into a pre-bend and then ease it down to its original pitch, the effect is startlingly steel-like.

Ex. 2 gives you a taste of this cool move. Bar 1 offers satisfying tension and release when the tangy major second ($F\sharp-E$) blossoms to a major third ($F\sharp-D$). Listen to how the prickly harmonic cluster simply relaxes into a fifth-position D triad ($A, F\sharp, D$).

Bar 2 features a juicy bend-and-hold maneuver that you can trot out anytime you want a compelling sus-4 sound. Steelers dedicate a pedal to this move, but both White and Roy Buchanan did it manually.

The next three examples are built around pre-bends and releases. These licks share virtually the same notes, but they sound different, thanks to their unique fingerings. A honky-tonk classic, Ex. 3a is compact—the action occurs within three frets. Contrast that with Ex. 3b, which contains a position shift and doesn't sound quite as teary. In Ex. 3c, Nashville twang (beats one and two) meets Memphis soul (beats three and four).

Here's the point: If you're willing to investigate, you can usually find several ways to finger a phrase. White was a master at spinning subtle variations of hot licks, and it's one reason his playing is so enduring.

WAILING TRITONES

White works his B -bender hard in “You're Still on My Mind,” and some of the song's licks demand a string-pulling device. However, you can adapt many of the moves to standard guitar, so let's start with Ex. 4a, which tumbles through an $A7$ arpeggio before coming to rest on an obliquely bent major third. The sassy

THE OBLIQUE MYSTIQUE

► To emulate the crying sound of pedal steel, White would sustain one or two notes while bending another. With this *oblique* bending technique, you stretch one string while holding others perfectly still.

When playing single-note blues bends, it's okay to wrap your fretting-hand thumb around the neck, but this grip doesn't work well for oblique bends. The reason is simple: You

need to arch your fretting fingers to allow sustaining strings to ring against the bend, and a wrapped thumb position flattens your hand against the fretboard.



Fig. 1. To keep your fingers arched, park your thumb at the edge of the fretboard. Push toward your thumb, and use as many fingers as possible to stretch the string.



Fig. 2. For maximum string control, place your thumb directly opposite from your primary bending finger.

For a ringing oblique bend, position your thumb at the edge of the fretboard (Fig. 1). Arch your fingers, and push toward your thumb. Use only enough pressure to keep the string in contact with the fret crown. Don't press into the fretboard wood—instead, simply skate on the two metal surfaces. Whenever possi-

ble, back up your bending digit with other fingers for additional strength.

It's important to keep the stationary notes from drifting sharp. Playing in front of a mirror is a convenient way to check that only the bent string is moving. You'll have maximum control if you place your fretting-hand thumb directly opposite from your primary bending finger, as in Fig. 2.

Use a hybrid flatpick-and-fingers grip (Fig. 3) when playing oblique bends. With your middle and ring fingers, yank the treble strings so they slap the frets. —AE



Fig. 3. A hybrid flatpick-and-fingers grip lets you yank the treble strings for authentic chicken-pickin' tone.

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COWBOY ROCKERY

whole-step pre-bend and release in the last half of bar 1 make this lick a standout. As you drop from the root (A) to the $\flat 7$ (G), notice how beat three's sustaining interval expands from a major third (A-C#) to an edgy, attention-grabbing tritone (G-C#) in beat four.

Ex. 4b begins with the same third-to-tritone move, but ends with a neat bend into the IV chord, D. You have to be nimble to hit the concluding sixth interval on bar 2's downbeat. Begin the E to F# bend on the tail end of beat 4 (bar 1). At the apex of the bend, slip your 4th finger from C# to D on beat one (bar 2). The goal is to simultaneously arrive at F# and D, and that requires getting a nanosecond head start on the bend.

CHROMATIC TRANSITIONS

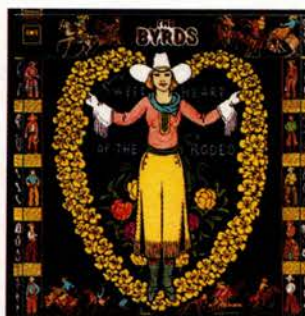
In "You're Still on My Mind" and "Close Up the Honky Tonks," White makes a chromatic transition from one chord to the next. The IV-V lick in Ex. 5a illustrates the process. Here, we sketch D, E \flat , and E by bending into and holding a succession of minor sixths. Beat four's E \flat generates a burst of melodic tension that's quickly released when E pops up in bar 2. Can you feel how the triplets play a role in propelling you toward the V chord?

In Ex. 5b, you descend in half-steps from E to D. This time, you suggest the chord of the moment by bending into and holding major thirds. If you can easily reach your

guitar's volume pot, give it a quick dip, and then open it up as you bend into E \flat and D.

LIQUID HARMONY

When it comes to making one interval *melt* into another, no one has topped the Tele-totin' White. A crying V-I passage inspired by "You're Still on My Mind," Ex. 6 hints at his fluidity. The trick is to *gradually* allow the bent notes to return to their original pitches. Timing is crucial. Just when you complete each release on the third string, fret a new note on the first string. To get a feel for this phrase, it helps to play the top and bottom lines by themselves before gluing them together. Though White wasn't known for using echo,



Ex. 4a

$\text{♩} = 100-132$
Country swing

(I) A7

let ring pre-B--R

9 (10) 8 9

T A B

Ex. 4b

$\text{♩} = 100-132$
Country swing

(I) A7 (IV) D

let ring pre-B--R

9 (10) 8 9

T A B

Ex. 5a

$\text{♩} = 100-132$

(IV) D (V) E \flat (V) E

let ring -- | l.r. ---- |

B 10 11 12

9 (11) 10 (12) 11 (13)

T A B

Ex. 5b

$\text{♩} = 100-132$

(V) E (V) E \flat (IV) D

let ring -- |

B 7 6 B

7 (9) 6 (8) 5 (7)

T A B

Ex. 6

$\text{♩} = 100-132$

(V) E7 (I) A

grad. R

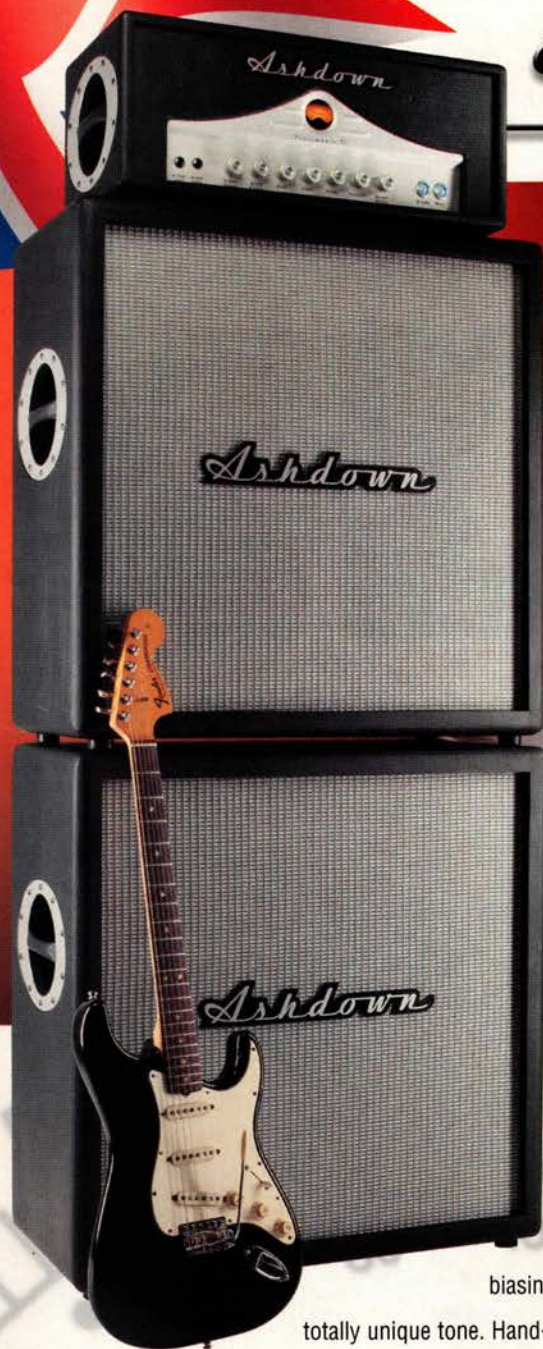
B 10 9 7 7 B R

11 (13) 11 7 (9) 7 6 (7) 6

T A B

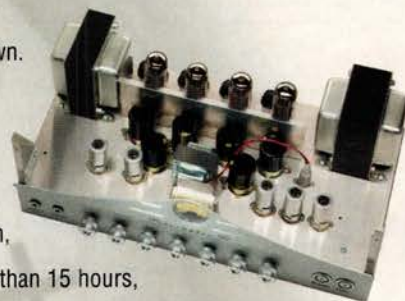


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COWBOY ROCKERY

a bit of delay makes this lick sound even more mysterious.

White's lines seem to be in constant flux. Ex. 7 illustrates how he would animate a I-V-IV-I figure by bending or releasing virtually every other note. Try plucking the first string with your middle finger and flatpicking the others, and remember to gently shake the half-note sixths as shown.

A LITTLE LEGERDEMAIN

White's stunning solo in "Close Up the Honky Tonks" is packed with the kind of held bends, pre-bends, and releases featured in Ex. 8. To pull this one off, it's essential to anticipate the position shifts. Play bar 1's first two beats in the twelfth position, move to the tenth position for beats three and four, and finally slip down to the eighth position for bar 2.

In addition to providing authentic cluck, the muted, half-fretted note in bar 1 (and of beat two) gives you a chance to silently release the held C# bend and then quickly shift positions before playing beat three. See how the *and* of beat three is a C# pre-bend? The idea is to create the illusion that the bent C# has been sustaining all this time, even though you've scooted down two frets and are now playing the bend with a different finger. Be sure to memorize this crafty move in other keys—it's 100 percent roadhouse approved.

The two strategically placed clucks (located on the *and* of beats two and four) in Ex. 9 are sonic surrogates designed to imply A and G, respectively. Because you don't have to sustain either of these clucks, you get an extra sliver of time to execute the next position shift. The goal is to be punctual with the downbeat—even if you have to "cheat" the previous upbeat. It's hard to say who came up with this idea, but all the pioneering country pickers—James Burton, Don Rich, Roy Nichols, and, of course, White—took advantage of it. More than a sound effect, chicken pickin' allows you to perform some 6-string sleight-of-hand.

SWEET OR SOUR?

Some country licks borrow notes from the tart minor-pentatonic scale (1, b3, 4, 5, b7), while others feature sweeter major-pentatonic (1, 2, 3, 5, 6) scale tones.

Taken from "King Apathy III," Ex. 10a shows one of White's stinging minor-pentatonic lines. It's the b7 and b3 (F and Bb) that give this phrase its bluesy character. Be sure to let the G and F ring together as you pluck the pre-bent

D and then release it to C. Such three-string oblique bends are physically challenging, but—wow—they sound so cool. Mick Taylor used variations of this move to power such countrified

Rolling Stones songs as "Honky Tonk Women" and "Dead Flowers."

Ex. 10b is typical of the major-pentatonic fills White played in "Nashville West." The 6, 3, and

Ex. 7

♩ = 108-132

(I) A (V) E (IV) D (I) A

Ex. 8

♩ = 100-126
Country swing

(I) A (IV) D

Ex. 9

♩ = 108-138

(I) G

Ex. 10a

♩ = 112-152

(I) G7

Ex. 10b

(I) G



COWBOY ROCKETRY

2 (E, B, and A) give this lick its backwoods flavor. For maximum chime, arch your fretting fingers to allow the open E string to sustain throughout the measure.

GOING ON A BENDER

Inspired by the Byrds' version of "Buckaroo"—a signature Buck Owens tune—Ex. 11 shows how White pushed Don Rich's snappy comping patterns to a new level. Your 4th finger gets a workout in bars 1 and 2, and the knuckle-busting oblique bend in bars 3 and 4 will put your string-stretching skills

to the test. Can you hold that whole-step F# bend for four beats while letting the top two strings sustain?

The cluckified, seventh-position opening move in bar 7 should now feel familiar, because you've already used it in the twelfth and tenth positions to launch Examples 8 and 9. Such recycling is the secret to a fat lick vocabulary. In fact, once you learn this I-IV-I-V example as written, break it apart:

- Shove the eighth-position A7 move (bars 1 and 2) to the first or third positions to comp D7 and E7.

- Slide D7's oblique bend (bars 3 and 4) up two frets to punch E7.

- Move the E lick (bars 7 and 8) down two frets to twangify a D chord.

Ex. 12 is your final exam. With its repeated tritone-to-major-third pulls, fast pre-bends

and releases, and callus-toughening held bends, this four-bar phrase wraps a handful of classic White moves into a neat I-IV-I-V package. Next time you're auditioning a Tele in a music store, see if you can turn some heads with this one. Use with a hybrid grip so you can really pop those high notes, and play with a crisp, but relaxed swing rhythm.

DRILLING DEEPER

To learn more about Clarence White and his deep bluegrass roots, read "Echoes of a Country-Rock Legend" in the Sep. '92 *GP*. White was also included in our May '98 "Titans of the Tele" cover story. If you crave more string-bending licks, check out "Bending Blitzkrieg" (June '99) and "Hot Wired: Roy Buchanan's 12 Steps to Better Bending" (May '98).

Ex. 11

♩ = 126-152

(I) A7 (IV) D7

let ring
hold B

let ring
hold B

pre-B-R

Ex. 12

♩ = 100-126

Country swing

(I) A7 (IV) D7 (I) A7 (V) E7

let ring
hold B

let ring
hold B

pre-B-R

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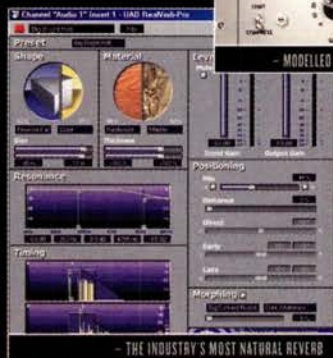
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CLASSIC COLUMN

Tommy Tedesco's Studio Log

The Incredible Hulk

Date: May 18, 1979

Leader: Joe Harnell

Hours Worked: 5 1/2

Wages Earned: \$417.80

Instruments Played: Yamaha electric, Ovation Glen Campbell model acoustic.

Devices Used: Polytone Mini-Brute amp, Electro-Harmonix Micro Synthesizer, Goodrich volume pedal, MXR analog delay.



TO MY GUITAR-PLAYING

buddies out there who have not seen *The Incredible Hulk*, I first want to tell them that, contrary to popular belief, the show is *not* my life story. (When I recorded the show, this was the type of teasing I got from the rest of the orchestra. Fortunately, this show can be a tough one to record, so there's not much time for kidding.)

Music for *The Incredible Hulk* demands what I call a "sound effects" guitar player. Throughout the scoring, mysterious sounds have to happen, and the guitar chair becomes the villain. Strong fuzztone sounds from the guitarist are supposed to strike fear into the television audience (and, sometimes, into the musician sitting directly in front of the guitar player). On this particular show, I impressed the leader with my Micro Synthesizer. (This means I'll have to be prepared to use it on future shows, too.)

I look back over the many years that I have been doing TV movies, and I remember all the shows that created their sounds because of guitar player gimmicks. Way back, a heavy fuzztone started almost all TV cops-and-robbers shows. After *Shaft* came in, all cops-and-robbers shows had the wah-wah sound.

So guitar players, remember: You need gimmicks for this business. We are carpenters with tools of our particular trade. God forbid you are asked for a phaser on a job and you don't own one—Good Bye, Charlie! If I were a newcomer


to the scene, at a bare minimum I would have a fuzz, a phaser, a volume pedal, and some type of echo unit, and I'd know how to use them.

Take a look at the music example. You will notice that there are many slurs, long notes, and short-note markings. These are things a guitar player should get used to doing. Nowhere, however, does it say "fuzz tone," "phaser," "Micro Synthesizer," etc. But experience in doing this type of show makes me instinctively go to those gimmicks.

I am constantly in touch with guitar players who show me how well they read out of exercise books. When I give them a part like this one,



however, their conception is not even close to what is written. I kid them, saying that if I ever produce a record date on exercise books, they will be the first I will call to sight read. Remember, reading notes alone is not music. Playing, feeling, and reading music makes music.

The late, great Tommy Tedesco was one of the most prolific session guitarists—and GP contributors—in history. For nearly 15 years, he packed his popular "Studio Log" column with helpful insights, advice, and hilarious tales from the trenches of the L.A. studio scene. This installment was published in the October 1979 issue. 

GUITAR

M - 502

ELECTRIC

HULK

50728



Odd-Meter Mayhem

BY ANDRÉ BUSH



WHAT DO ROCK BANDS LIKE

P.O.D. and Soundgarden have in common with daring jazz guitarists such as John McLaughlin and Wayne Krantz? They know how to add excitement to grooves by using odd meters. You can too. For example, if you're stuck in the 4/4 doldrums, try

dropping an eighth-note from each measure. Suddenly you'll have a compelling 7/8 ride. The challenge is creating odd-meter melodies and riffs that sound lyrical and organic, and the secret lies in grouping together different meters within each measure.

Let's start things out in the rock camp with

Ex. 1, a heavy crunch lick in 7/4. Follow the repeat signs and loop it a few times, and you'll notice that it flows nicely, despite its odd meter. Its smooth phrasing is due to its *rhythmic grouping*—instead thinking of this as one bar of 7/4, think of it as one bar of 4/4 coupled to one bar of 3/4 (starting at the B \flat 5 chord).

Armed with this rhythmic-grouping approach, let's tackle a more intimidating odd-meter monster—15/8. Indeed, it's a tricky time signature, but if you break it up, as in Ex. 2a, it becomes much more accessible. Instead of counting fifteen pulses, evenly count aloud "1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2, 1 2, 1 2." This partitions things into three bars of 3/8 coupled to three of 2/8—easy. Once you have this grouping internalized, stop counting aloud and simply clap the strong beats, as shown by the accents in Ex. 2b.

Now, use your 15/8 prowess to make music. Ex. 3 starts you off with an A minor-pentatonic loop. Reinforce the accented notes by tapping the strong beats with your foot, and you'll see how the rhythmic grouping from Examples 2a and 2b manifests itself within a simple melody.

Your next challenge is subdividing. In Ex. 4a, two eighth-notes have been split into sixteenths, and the loop has an angular sound, à la fusion pioneers Larry Coryell, John McLaughlin, and Al DiMeola. Finally, see if you can incorporate rests into your odd-meter mayhem—even ones that fall on the strong beats (Ex. 4b). The accent markers remind you where they are.

André Bush teaches at The Jazzschool in Berkeley, California, has performed on VH1, MTV, and the Lilith Fair tour, and is writing a book (with CD) called *Modern Jazz Guitar Styles for Mel Bay Publications*. Visit him at andrejbush.com.

Ex. 1

♩ = 120

Brutal E5 B \flat 5 A5



Ex. 2a

Count aloud:



Ex. 2b

Clap accents:



Ex. 3

♩ = 200

Am7



Ex. 4a

♩ = 200

Sub-dividing

Am/maj7



Ex. 4b

Adding rests

E7 \sharp 9





Balloon Tones

BY JUDE GOLD



NO MATTER WHAT STYLE OF music you play, one of the hippest harmonic devices you can have at your fingertips is the ability to use up-

per-pedal tones—or, as I like to call them, *balloon tones*. Take it from the greats—Duke Ellington, Buddy Guy, Herbie Hancock, Eric Johnson, J.S. Bach, and countless others—balloon tones

add magic to any melody or chord progression, no matter what style of music you play. You've surely heard this trick in action. Let's show your fingers how it's done.

Start by playing through Ex. 1, a recognizable, Count Basie-approved cliché that has closed more swing tunes than there are stars in the sky. Notice how the C on the high

string—like a balloon tethered to each chord—appears throughout? It's a *common tone* in each of the chords, and putting it in the highest voice gives these grips a unifying shimmer. Though each chord demands you reshuffle your fretting-hand fingers, your ears only hear blissfully smooth voice-leading.

If you think balloon tones don't show up in grittier styles, such as Chicago blues, then Buddy Guy has something to say about it. Ex 2a shows you how Guy transforms a typical minor-pentatonic lick into a sparkly two-note attack by adding a balloon tone throughout. Over a slow shuffle, pluck the low notes with your thumb, and the C balloon with your index or middle finger. Once you've got it down, try shifting this approach to a major key: Fret the C with your 4th finger and play twangy stabs such as those in Ex. 2b.

Keyboard maestros such as Herbie Hancock use balloon tones to connect seemingly unrelated chords to create alluring progressions, such as the one Ex. 3. The high G that crowns each of these grips produces a hypnotic effect.

For proof that balloon tones take your music higher, check out how they show up in gospel shuffles. Ex. 4a serves up a sprightly, Jimmy Smith-inspired I-chord vamp that is unified by a high C. Start by just playing the upper three strings. Once you get these three grips down, try adding a low-C pedal on the fourth string.

All you need now is a vibrant I-IV-V turnaround, like the one in Ex. 4b. Again, we have a C balloon throughout, but dig the hip V chord, F/G—notice how it's really the IV chord (F), but with the V's root (G) in the bass? Try using this grip

Ex. 1

♩ = 126

Swing jazz

Ex. 2a

♩ = 108-168

Minor blues shuffle

Ex. 2b

♩ = 120

Blues shuffle



Ex. 3

Freely Cmaj7 Abmaj7 Fadd9 Db6/9#11 C6/9



Ex. 4a

♩ = 100-120

Gospel vamp

♩ = 100-120

Gospel vamp

♩ = 100-120

(I) C

T A B

8 8 8 8 8 8 8

(10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10)

Ex. 4b

♩ = 100-120

Gospel I-IV-V

♩ = 100-120

Gospel I-IV-V

♩ = 100-120

(I) C7

(IV) F6/9

(V) F/G

T A B

8 8 8 8 8 8 8

(10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10)

to liven up blues tunes in C when G7 gets tired.

Finally, try using balloon tones melodically, as Eric Johnson might in the middle of one of his soaring solos. Perhaps inspired by composers such as Bach and Vivaldi, Johnson, and other ferocious Strat-mongers, such as Yngwie Malmsteen, sometimes alternate between one high note and several lower notes, as in Ex. 5. This lick is mesmerizing when you loop it repeatedly at quick tempos, but start slow. It calls for wide stretches and a whopping six notes per downbeat.

Ex. 5

♩ = 80

Rock solo

Cmaj7add11

♩ = 80

Rock solo

Cmaj7add11

T A B

8 8 8 8 8 8 8

(10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10)

READER'S CHALLENGE • TAP/PLUCK TERROR

IF THERE WERE LAWS AGAINST PLAYING FAST, TOM KOPYTO

of Agawam, Massachusetts, would have had his guitar impounded long ago. You don't, however, have to be a shredder to appreciate his adventurous approach. Daringly incorporating picked notes, tapped notes, and one plucked note in the same lick, Kopyto launches into flurries of hammers and pulls that tear a new hole in the key of D minor.

"Because the work is evenly divided between both hands, this 'tap/pluck' technique enables you to get a more consistent sound and

achieve greater speeds when playing legato runs," offers Kopyto. "Hold the pick normally and tap with your middle finger, using your ring finger to pluck the note just before beat four in the first measure."

The ring-finger—or *anular*—pluck is denoted by an "a" between the staves. To complete the descending Dm7 arpeggio in measure 2, you'll need a 7-string, though the notes *can* be re-fingered for standard guitars.

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Want to help the world play better guitar? Submit your candidate for Reader's Challenge (preferably notated and on cassette or CD), along with a brief explanation of why it's cool and how to play it, to *Guitar Player Reader's Challenge*, 2800 Campus Dr., San Mateo, CA 94403. Include your name, address, e-mail, and phone number. Materials won't be returned, but we *will* listen to all submissions. You'll hear from us if your lick is chosen.



Insanely fast

Dm

V

T A B

8 8 8 8 8 8 8

(10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10) (10)

* Pluck w/ ring finger.



Making Scales Swing

BY BARRETT TAGLIARINO



ALTHOUGH SCALES

aren't really music, they don't have to sound like melodic stairways to nowhere. Truth is, they have a natural lyricism all their own, if you can just bring it out. In fact, if you're clever, you can give

a descending major scale an inherent sense of motion over a II-V-I progression. You can make it *swing*.

The first step, of course, is identifying the key center. If the progression is *Em7-A7-Dmaj7*, then a *D* major scale is called for. Although we are often taught to play

scales ascending, the trick here is to play the scale *descending*—it will naturally sound more musical that way, as it does in Ex. 1. Jazz up your eighth-notes by “swinging” them—as you would eighth-notes in a blues shuffle, but with a more relaxed, behind-the-beat feel.

Ex. 1's descent started on *E*, the root of our *IIIm7* chord, but to really make these lines swing, try Ex. 2a, which starts on the 3 (*G*). Notice how the chord tones fall on the *strong* beats (beats one, two, three, and four) and the non-chord tones—the *passing tones*—fall on the off beats

Ex. 1

♩ = 88-168

Swing feel

Em7 A7 Dmaj7

Ex. 2a

♩ = 88-168

Swing feel

Em7 A7 Dmaj7

Ex. 2b

♩ = 88-168

Swing feel

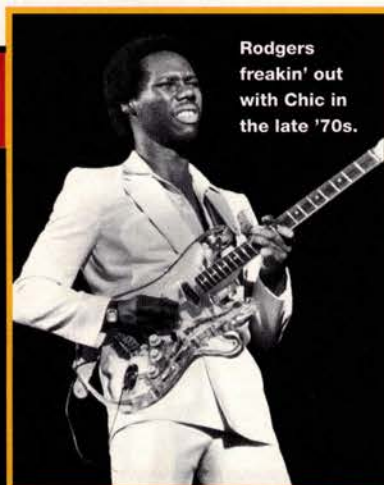
Em7 A7 Dmaj7

Ex. 2c

♩ = 88-168

Swing feel

Em7 A7 Dmaj7



Rodgers
freakin' out
with Chic in
the late '70s.

TIPS JAR NILE RODGERS

“YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CLASSI-cally trained or able to play jazz,” offers guitarist Nile Rodgers, “but, boy, I think it helps.” Rodgers’ fluency in multiple genres has surely helped him land gigs playing with—and producing—such heavies as David Bowie, Mick Jagger, Madonna, Diana Ross, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Jeff Beck.

“I know a lot of guitar players who are outstanding in one area—like playing blues scales all night—and sometimes that’ll sound really hip. But give them some music where the keys are changing all the time, and they’re like, ‘Whaaa?’ The fact is, when you’re in a key with a strong major tonality, blues scales can sound ridiculous.”



Ex. 3a

♩ = 88-168

Swing feel

A7 Dmaj7

(the *ands*, as in "one *and* two *and* three *and*..." etc.). It fits our IIIm7-V7-Imaj7 in *D* perfectly! Play through **Examples 2b** and **2c**, and you'll discover that this approach works equally well starting on the 5 or the 7 (*B* and *D*, respectively).

Longer time spent on any chord requires the use of a chromatic note to make the seven-note scale fit a full measure of eighth-notes. In **Ex.**

3a, for instance, the chromatic note (*A♭*) is placed so that it occurs on the *and* of beat one, allowing the chord tones to continue landing on the strong beats throughout a measure of *A7*. **Ex. 3b** similarly employs a chromatic note to cover a full measure of *Em7*.

Once you know the rules, you are free to break them. **Ex. 4** starts on a non-chord tone (*A*) and puts a chromatic note on beat four of the opening measure. As in examples **2a** and **3b**, an arpeggio is used to ascend (bar 2), and in bars 3 and 4, a descending *D* major scale once again nails the chord tones on the strong beats.

G.I.T. instructor Barrett Tagliarino has performed in Europe, Asia, and America, is an established L.A. session player, and has released an instructional video entitled Classic Rock Soloing [Starlicks Video/Hal-Leonard]. Visit him at monsterguitars.com/barrett.

Ex. 3b

♩ = 88-168

Swing feel

Em7 A7 Dmaj7

Ex. 4

♩ = 88-168

Swing feel

Em7 A7 Dmaj7

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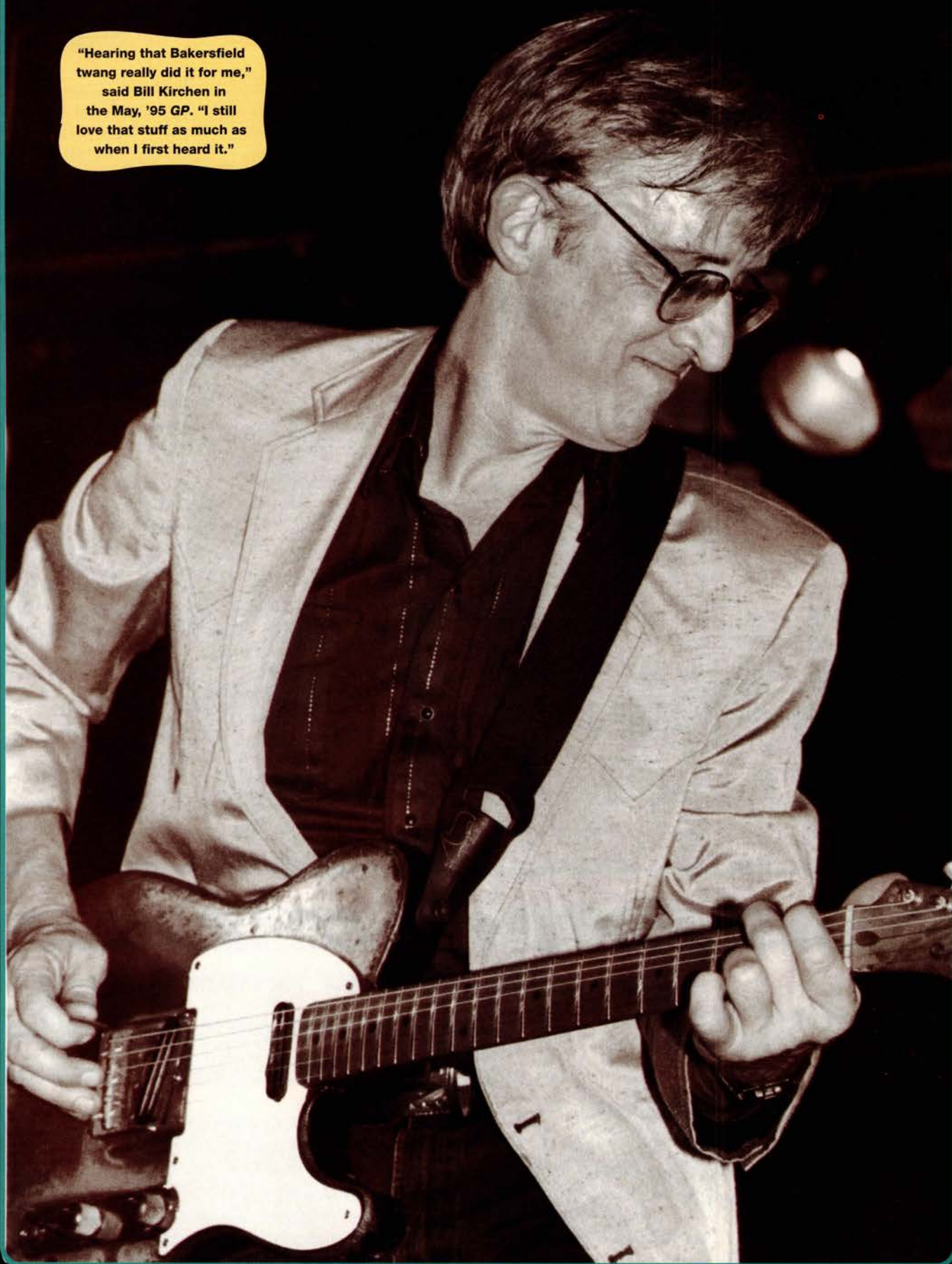
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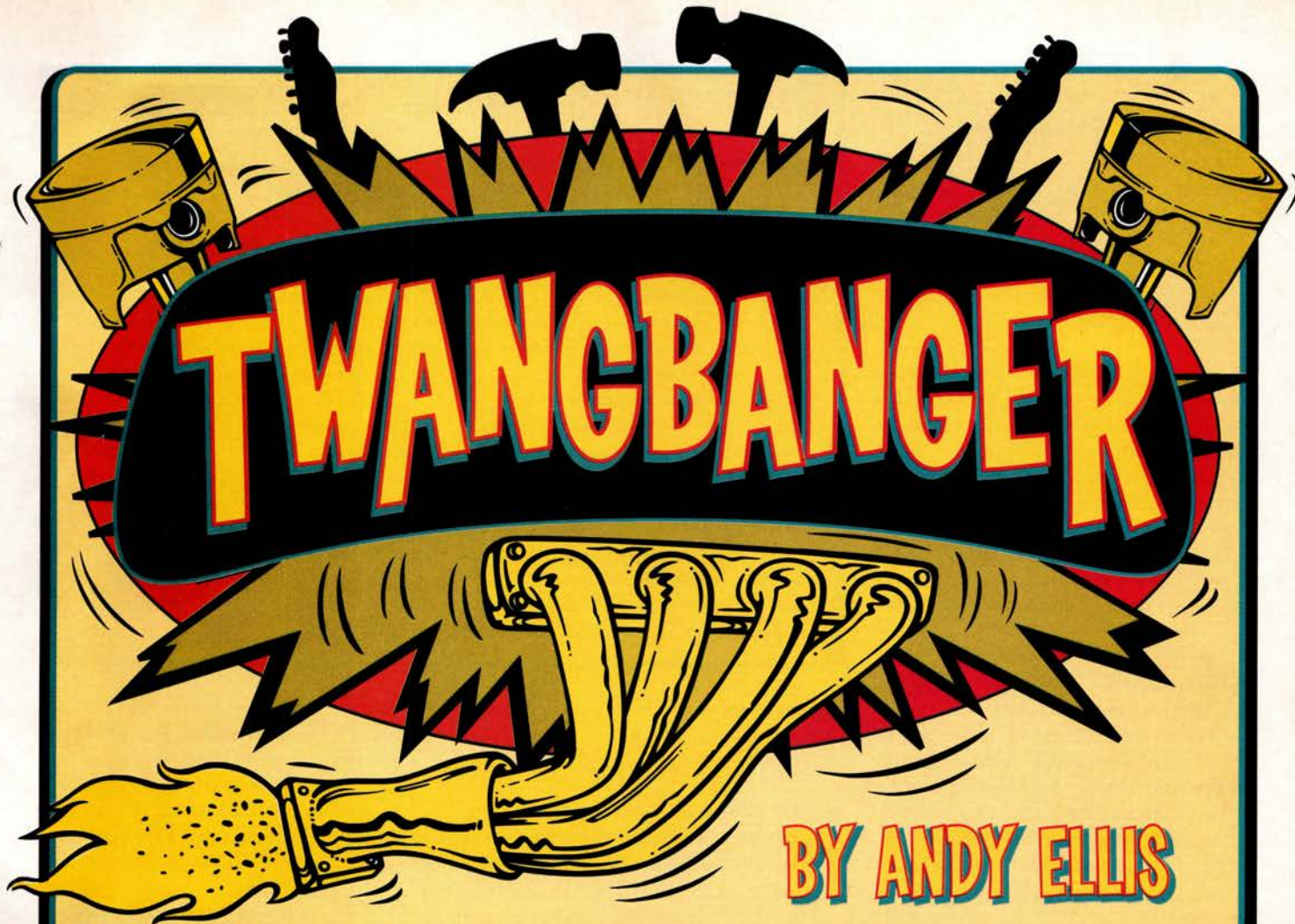
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"Hearing that Bakersfield twang really did it for me," said Bill Kirchen in the May, '95 GP. "I still love that stuff as much as when I first heard it."





BILL KIRCHEN ON HOT-ROD TONE AND TELECASTER ABUSE

T

he last seven months have been a wild ride for the Tele-wielding Bill Kirchen. For starters, he has driven thousands of miles to promote his new solo album, *Tied to the Wheel* [Hightone]. Then last fall, he and several labelmates formed the Twang-Bangers, a six-piece touring outfit that joins

Kirchen's dieselbilly rhythm section—bassist Johnny Castle and drummer Jack O'Dell—with Tele monster Redd Volkaert, pedal steeler Joe Goldmark, and acoustic guitarist Dallas Wayne. The band's debut, *26 Days on the Road* [Hightone], features stunning fretwork from both Volkaert and Kirchen. > > >



Primarily recorded live, *26 Days* mixes such road-house classics as "Truck Drivin' Man" and "Hot Rod Lincoln" with tears-in-your-beer country ballads, rockabilly ravers, and zippy Texas swing.

Juggling two bands has kept Kirchen busy, but the real surprise came when "Poultry in Motion"—a string-popping extravaganza from *Tied to the Wheel* that pays homage to James Burton's classic "Corn Pickin'"—received a Grammy nomination for Best Country Instrumental Performance.

I spoke with Kirchen following a trio gig in Austin, Texas, while he was getting an oil change and swigging a venti Americano.

"I'm multitasking," he laughed, "so I have to make sure I don't confuse the oil with the coffee."

The lanky 54-year-old offered detailed insights into tracking *Tied to the Wheel* and performing with Volkaert in the TwangBangers. Kirchen also shared some crucial hot-rod pick-

KIRCHEN'S EVOLVING TELE

KIRCHEN HAS PICKED THE SAME Fender Telecaster for more than 30 years. "I traded a Gibson SG for it in 1968," he says. "I wanted a Tele because my three favorite guitarists—Roy Nichols, Don Rich, and James Burton—were all playing one. I've never been able to determine what year mine was built. The serial number—2222—would indicate it was made in the early '50s, but the neck doesn't have that real baseball-bat shape. It was wired like the original Teles—where the middle position selects the neck pickup, and the neck position adds a capacitor to roll off the treble—but the body is a non-bound sunburst, and I don't think that came up until later in the '50s. The guitar was immaculate when I got it, but now the finish is almost completely worn off, and the only original parts are the body, neck, and the string ferrules on the back.

"These days, it has three brass saddles mounted on a Vintique bridge plate made by Jay Monterose, and narrow, twin-blade Joe Barden humbuckers in both the neck and bridge positions. I like humbuckers because I play in a trio 98 percent of the time, so I need to have some body in my tone. Joe managed to find the right compromise between fat and twang—which are almost mutually exclusive.

"When I fly with my Tele, I remove the neck and pack everything in a suitcase. I eventually stripped out the screw holes, but Jay put Vintique threaded inserts in the neck, and now I use fine-thread machine screws to attach it. I've done my best to duplicate this guitar with an '80s reissue, but it's startling how different they sound. For me, that was a lesson in just how much of an electric guitar's tone comes from its body and neck."

—AE

ing secrets and recalled making music with the late, great Danny Gatton.

• • • • •

How did it feel to be nominated for a Grammy?

You could have knocked me over with a feather. I fly *way* under the music-business

radar, so it came as a total surprise. Actually, "Poultry in Motion" was a fluke. I'd booked some studio time in Texas while I was on the road with my trio, Too Much Fun. But then I got a killer throat infection and couldn't sing. I'd been goofing around with this chicken pickin' instrumental idea for a while, so we wrote and tracked it

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on the spot. I played my Tele through the studio's blackface Fender Deluxe and used a Jerry Jones 6-string bass to double that boogie-woogie riff an octave lower.

How do you get those extremely clucky tones?

I use a strange, cross-finger picking technique. It's something I developed intuitively, so it took me forever to figure out what I was doing. My thumb plucks a *higher* string than my index finger—just the opposite of the standard fingerpicking setup. For example, I'll pick the *B* string with my thumb, and use my index finger to play the *G* string. Whichever finger isn't plucking dampens the adjacent string, and that's how I get that popping tone.

In "Dim Lights, Thick Smoke," you lower your open-sixth string during the solo. What's going on?

I push the neck forward to drop the sixth string down a half-step. I'm forever doing neck bends. I discovered that technique long ago, when

I was trying to cop a Hank Garland solo. He used a Bigsby on only one note—*E_b*. It was so cool that I had to figure out how to do it with my Tele. I can actually dip a whole-step when I want to, and the guitar seems to stay in tune pretty well.

You're playing some low, twangy bass notes in "Truck Stop at the End of the World." What tuning did you use?

I put .011s on my Tele—I normally use D'Addario .010s—and tuned down a whole-step. It looks like I'm playing in the key of *A*, but the song is really in *G*. I detune so I can hit low *D* and *G* on the sixth and fifth strings.

Since the early '70s, when you played with Commander Cody & His Lost Planet Airmen, you've been known for fast, super-clean riffing. Do you use a locked wrist and straight picking forearm to ensure speed and accuracy?

No, I'm a loose-wrist cat. In fact, I spend a fair amount of time with my pinky planted on the guitar—so much so that I've worn a half-inch trough in my Tele. I plant my finger between the bridge and control plates, and wiggle my wrist around from there.

Do you use a heavy pick?

For years and years, I used extra-heavy picks, but I've just switched to Fender mediums. It was a revelation! See, I tend to be ham-fisted. When I played with an extra-heavy pick, the strings would stretch up a damn quarter-tone when I hit them hard. But with a medium flatpick, I

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don't knock a note out of tune as badly when I attack it. There's also not as much difference between the initial attack and the sustain, and, to my ears, that fattens up the tone.

For that quintessential Bakersfield sound—

what you hear on old Buck Owens and Merle Haggard records—I use a flatpick and fingers. That's how you get a snappy Tele tone. I think steel players influenced Don Rich and Roy Nichols to pick that way.

There's another side to your playing that features syncopated Travis picking. For example, during your second solo in "Quit Feelin' Sorry for You," you get a fat, ringing tone reminiscent of Chet Atkins. Are you still playing your Tele and using a flatpick?

Yeah—I just move to the neck pickup and lighten up my attack. As a kid, I was too lazy to work out Merle Travis parts—and way too lazy to learn the intricacies of what Chet Atkins was doing—but I loved the sound, so I came up with

my own half-stolen, half-made up licks. Typically I use a flatpick-and-finger approach, but sometimes I play bare fingered. I played that way on Nick Lowe's *The Impossible Bird*. Something special happens when you're touching the strings with the fingertips on both hands—you're more connected.

What's the secret to getting a good faux steel sound?

You have to let the strings ring against each other. For that, you need an arched hand position, and your amp has to be clean enough to allow each note to be heard distinctly. The idea is to grab notes that work together. You know how Jerry Byrd would play a sixth chord up the neck and work his tone knob for a wah effect? I'll try to ape that by fretting a D6 at the second position [F#, D, and B on the top three strings] and then move that voicing up the neck while waggling either my volume knob or tone knob. It's a tip of the hat to the steel guitar. I'm always trying to nod toward it rather than duplicate it, and I've never tried to do the real intricate bends. I'm interested in the arpeggios and chordal aspects of the steel guitar. My ear is stuck in the major-6th chord—I haven't moved to the major-7th chord yet.

What gear do you use in the studio?

To my ears, the money rig is a Tele through a Deluxe. Someone loaned me a Deluxe back when we were recording the second Cody album,

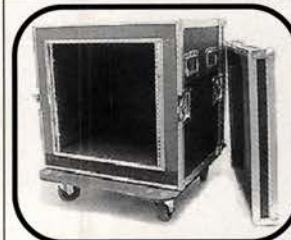
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Hot Licks, Cold Steel & Truckers' Favorites. We cut "Semi Truck" with it, and I've loved that sound ever since.

On Dylan's "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues"—the last cut on Tied to the Wheel—you get a

gnarly, churning tone. Is that still a Deluxe?

For that song, I used a Fulltone Full-Drive pedal and two amps. One was a Deluxe, and the other one was a Carlson Tremo Pup 2x10 combo built by Mark Norwine. It has EL34s and gets a great, bell-like steel tone. I knew I was going to take three solo choruses. I wanted to hold off and not hit the Full-Drive until the last one, but you can hear me kick it on going into the second solo. You know how sometimes you need a little extra something? I just couldn't wait.

You end your extended solo with a whistling, high-B harmonic and then raise it to fit the next chord. Did you plan this in advance?

That was completely spontaneous. I was sitting in the control room, and after I hit the har-

monic, the engineer—unasked—just reached over and poked my B string behind the nut to bend it up a half-step. When something cool like that happens in the studio, you *have* to leave it in the mix.

In "How Mountain Girls Can Love," you pick a bluegrass break on a flat-top. What guitar are you playing?

It's a '64 Martin 00-18 that belongs to my wife. It's my favorite acoustic right now. I have an old D-18, but it was designed for big, booming bass, and that doesn't do you any good in the studio. People associate me with a Tele, but when I'm at home, I exclusively play acoustic guitar with bare fingers, sitting down. Yet when I'm playing in public, I play electric guitar with a flatpick, standing up. I've never been able to reconcile this. It's two different worlds.

Your lust for twang has drawn you into orbit with other Tele greats, including the late Danny Gatton. How did you meet him?

I first met Danny in the early '70s, when Al Anderson [NRBQ's legendary Telecaster player] told me there was a guitar repairman in the district. If Al mentioned that Danny was also one of the world's greatest musicians, I sure don't remember it. I took my Tele to Danny to be refretted, and he was extremely personable. He knew who I was—he'd heard *Hot Licks*, *Cold Steel*—and we sat there talking for a couple of hours while he put new frets in my guitar and

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made me a brass nut.

He said, "You know, you have an old Tele. You should have round knobs, a round string tree, and a 5-screw pickguard." I'd only owned one Tele—I didn't know from squat. So he gave

me all that stuff, and then he said, "Do you want to jam some?" And I remember thinking, "Well, sure. Maybe I'll show this friendly repairman a lick or two." Then—jeez—he started to play. I'd never heard anything like it. To me, Danny had hellacious jazz chops, but he played with a rock and roll sound. None of that "throw your coat over the amp" tone that jazz guys seem to have. He loved Roy Nichols and Scotty Moore, so he had this great combination of snappy tone and reckless, rockabilly attitude.

When I first met Danny, he had a Charlie Christian pickup in the neck position of his Tele. At some point, he and Joe Barden decided it wasn't a good idea to route out a Tele to put a pickup in it, so they started making a single-

blade pickup that would drop into a Tele body. That was the origin of the Barden pickup—which evolved into a narrow, twin-blade humbucker.

I played in a band with Danny for a while. He hired me to be his frontman. I think he enjoyed my sense of humor on the instrument. People would ask me, "Aren't you intimidated by being in a band with Danny?" But I thought it would be pretentious of me to be intimidated by Danny, because there was no way I was competing with him. The way I saw it, I had the best seat in the house.

How do you feel about performing with Redd Volkaert in the TwangBangers?

Performing with Redd reminds me of sharing a stage with Danny. I have to remember to keep playing, and not stand there making a trout mouth. To be honest with you, it was so astonishing for me to hear this guy that I had difficulty remembering what it is that I do. It made me focus on my inadequacies, rather than my strengths, and I found myself choking. Not a good place to be when you're performing! But I finally got around it, and, in the end, it was educational. I rediscovered a great thing about music: It's not a contest. That's why kids in a garage band who've only played electric guitar for two or three years can make timeless music. There's room for us all. ■

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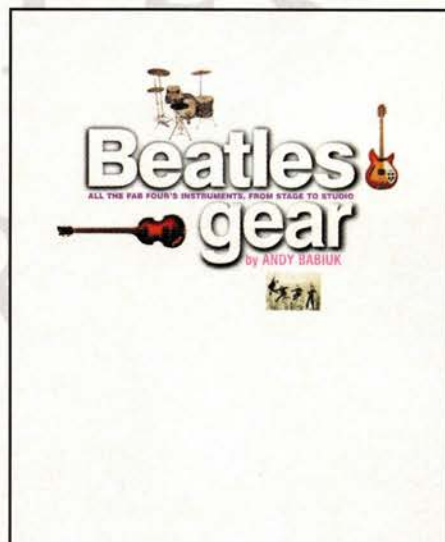
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"I just like weird things
and nasty sounds," exclaims
Spencer (left, Bauer is right).



ROCK AND ROLL SAVIORS

THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION REVELS IN ROCK'S DIRTY, NASTY, AND SWEATY UNDERBELLY

"Our name is confusing to some people," admits Jon Spencer, "because we've always been a rock and roll band. But that's okay. I think rock and roll *needs* to be confusing. It should always be a dangerous and shocking thing." ■ While the Blues Explosion

doesn't take its cue from uptown blues, it *does* present a volatile stylistic mix of blues renegades such as Hound Dog Taylor and the House-rockers—a band one critic called "the Ramones of the blues"—and brash, New York City rock. On the group's eighth record, *Plastic Fang* [Matador], the Explosion's signature sound is tighter, > > >

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ROCK AND ROLL SAVIORS

more focused, and *groovier*. Much of the credit is due to producer Steve Jordan (Keith Richards, The Fabulous Thunderbirds), who helped the band hone its sound without sacrificing any of its sweaty swagger. The record also spotlights Spencer and co-guitarist Judah Bauer—with Bauer acting as a Steve Cropper-style foil to Spencer's devil-may-care sonic assault.

Acme bravely blended dance and remix elements with your sound, but Plastic Fang is a solid rock and roll album. What motivated the decision to make a more traditional record?

Spencer: During the writing process, it just became clear that a more straight-ahead rock record was going to happen. We never sat down and said, "Let's make a real straight rock and roll album."

You've made seven albums without working with an outside producer—why did you bring in a collaborator for this one?

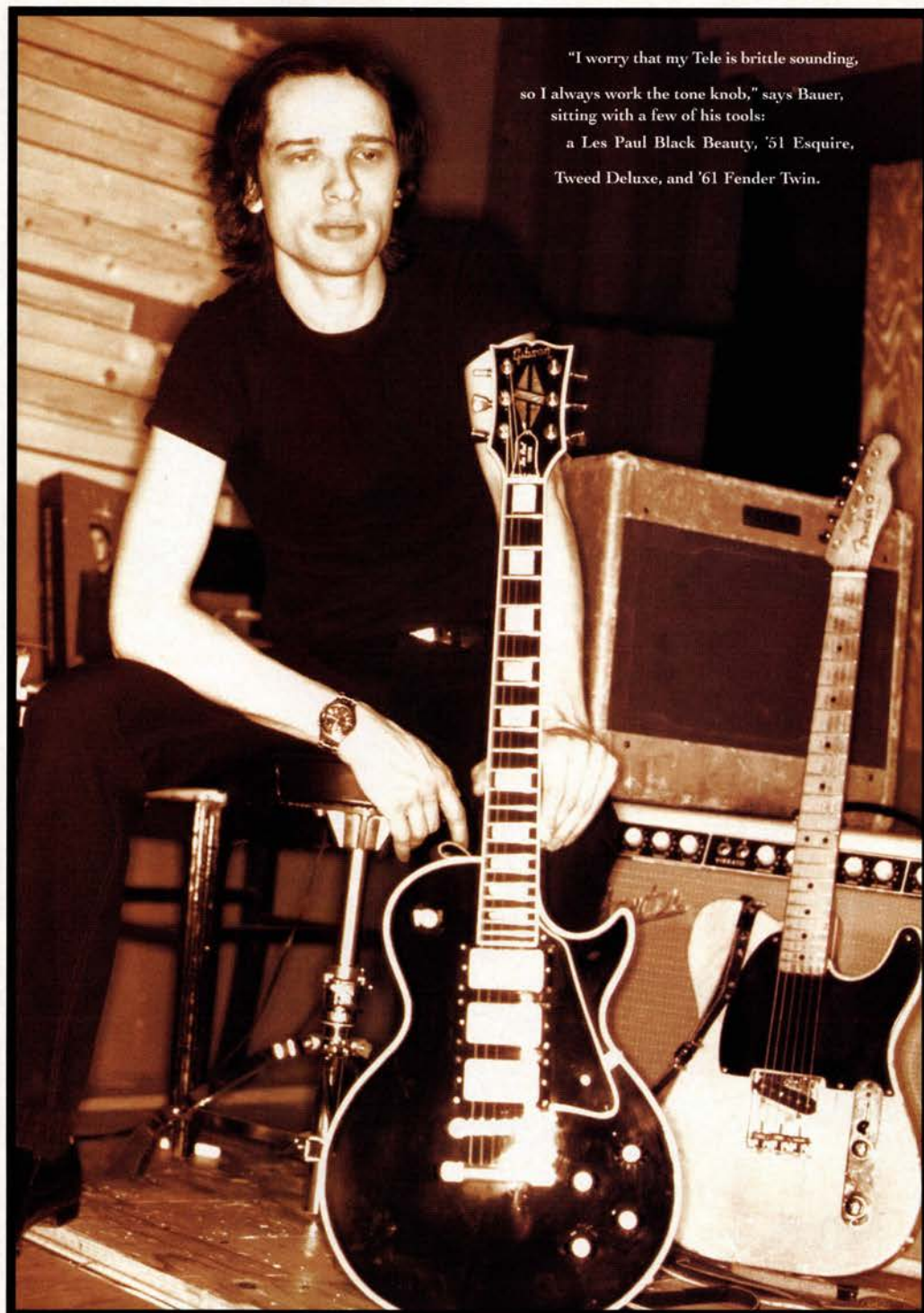
Spencer: I've always felt very strongly about how the band should be presented, but, over the years, I've been able to let that go and allow the band to become more democratic. Now it's easier to make a record with someone else there to help steer the ship.

Why did you choose Steve Jordan?

Spencer: We thought he would be a nice fit with the songs we had written. His stuff is always very organic, funky, and natural, with a real emphasis on the groove.

Bauer: Although we had never worked with him before, we knew what we were going to get: a live record that's all about tones and vibey performances. I'm a huge fan of the Keith Richards' records Steve worked on, because they have the *best* tones. Real pure Tele sounds, and a clear-sounding yet nasty production.

Is there something you can point to on Plastic Fang and say,



"I worry that my Tele is brittle sounding, so I always work the tone knob," says Bauer, sitting with a few of his tools: a Les Paul Black Beauty, '51 Esquire, Tweed Deluxe, and '61 Fender Twin.

"We wouldn't have done this if Steve wasn't here?"

Spencer: One of the best things Steve did was that he didn't change us and make us something we weren't.

Bauer: The album would have been more punk—a lot of the songs were originally written at punk rock tempos—and Jon's vocals would have been more buried in the mix and ad-libbed. Steve

made Jon write out his lyrics and enunciate more.

Did Steve have an effect on your parts, Judah?

Bauer: He helped me play behind the beat. I didn't realize it before, but we really didn't play in time for ten years! We have a great drummer, but his meter fluctuates. You always hear about the Stax rhythm section, and laying back on the two and four, but you

can't lay back if the two and four isn't stable. Steve would come out and bang on a cowbell to help us stabilize the groove. Now we have so much more respect for slower tempos, and everything we do is more musical.

Jon, in the past you've cited influences from Link Wray to Sonic Youth. What's the common thread that runs through those two seemingly polar opposites of

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ROCK AND ROLL SAVIORS

the guitar spectrum?

Spencer: Both of them show you that you can do whatever you want with the guitar—that it's not about technique and fancy fretwork, it's about soul and having a unique voice. Plus, I just love the nasty sounds they get.

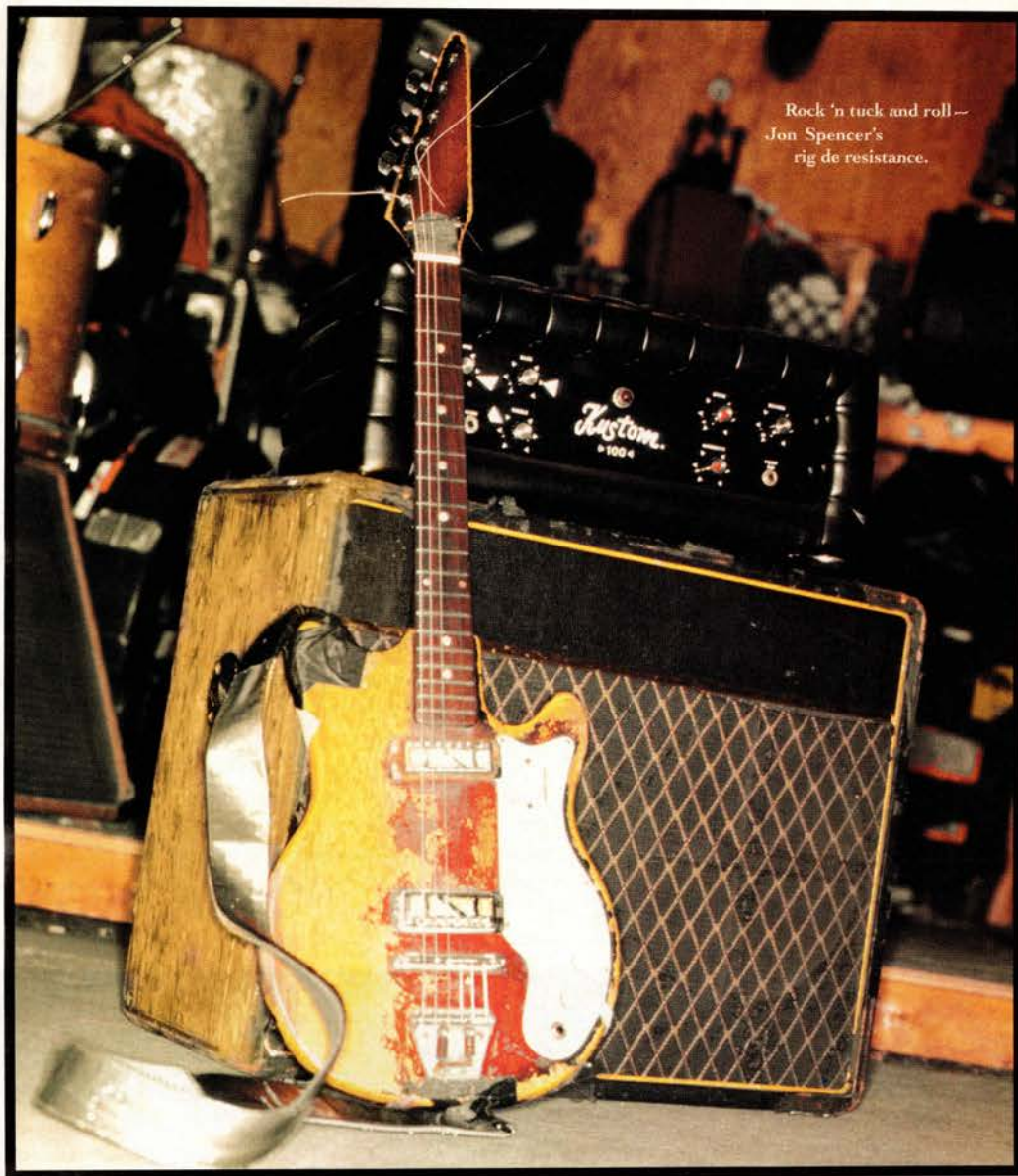
You've also cited Hound Dog Taylor as an influence. What is it about him that grabbed you?

Spencer: The guitar tones on his records are the *best*. Plus, it was a big deal for us to hear him because the instrumentation was the same as ours: two guitars and drums. Although I love Hound Dog's slide style, a lot of what moved us was the other guitarist, Brewer Phillips. He was doing all these cool, low-register runs on his Tele.

What can guitarists glean from Hound Dog Taylor that they can't get from, say, B.B. King?

Spencer: To me, Hound Dog Taylor has more of a sense of humor. I've never met B.B. King—and I'm sure he's a sweetheart—I'm just not into that style. It doesn't seem very fun. Hound Dog Taylor is fun and very sexy.

Bauer: I know B.B. loves what he does, but, for me, players such



Rock 'n' tuck and roll—
Jon Spencer's
rig de resistance.

STEVE JORDAN ON PRODUCING PLASTIC FANG



Steve Jordan is a rock and roll renaissance man. Although he's best known for his drumming, Jordan is credited with vocals, bass, guitar, and production on hundreds of records—including releases by the Rolling Stones, the Blues Brothers, Soul Asylum, and Don Henley. Here he

shares his thoughts on capturing the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion in all their live glory, and getting the ever-elusive "perfect take." —DF

"I thought the Blues Explosion's last album, *Acme*, was a very cool record," says Jordan, "and I formulated some ideas of what I would do with them in the studio after I heard it. But it wasn't until I saw them live that I *really* realized what I wanted to do.

"My goal for *Plastic Fang* was to capture their live energy and make a more song-based record than *Acme*—which is very chopped up and remix oriented. To do that, I tried to impress upon the guys the

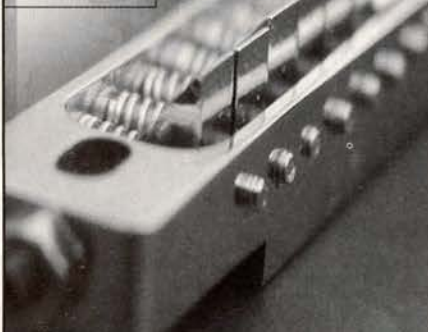
importance of getting 'the take.' That's the cornerstone of a good record. If you get a great take—that *magic*—everything else is icing on the cake, and the song comes alive. A magic take is a mixture of a great live performance, unpredictability, and feel. If you find yourself working really hard to manufacture a good feel—or if someone says 'We'll fix it in the mix'—then you're in trouble.

"The other big thing we worked on was the groove. When you have a band like the Blues Explosion with so much energy, sometimes the tendency is to play too fast and blast past the music. When you're aware of the rhythm, then you can get the most out of the song and the groove. It's a very fine line, though. As a producer, if you try to hold the band back too much, you'll take the energy away.

"It's important to realize that if you get a track at just the right tempo, the feel can actually be *more* exciting even though it's slower. That's the beauty of time and rhythm. We worked on that for a while, and when we got it, the music just *exploded*."

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ROCK AND ROLL SAVIORS

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Who are some of your influences, Judah?

Bauer: One of the things I've tried to develop as a player is not wearing my influences on my sleeve as much. During the recording of *Extra Width*, you can really tell I was listening to Steve Cropper and the Stax/Volt thing. On *Orange*, it's apparent I was listening to the Meters a lot, and, on *Acme*, I was into bluegrass music and Clarence White.

You can still hear a Clarence White influence on "Killer Wolf" from Plastic Fang.

Bauer: I love Clarence White. I have almost every record he played on—even some old Andy Griffith albums. I just heard a bootleg of him warming up backstage by himself and it's amazing. I used a B-Bender on "Killer Wolf" and "Tore Up and Broke." That's a cool sound. I

use it in a pretty rudimentary way, though.

How do your styles complement each other?

Spencer: Sonically, I do the fuzzed-out thing, with more midrange—what I call the "vacuum cleaner" sound. Judah's tone is more stinging, and he dials in more bottom end and highs.

Bauer: Jon has that real blown-out sound—which puts me in the position of being a counterpoint to that. My job is to add something pretty.

What were the amp setups for Plastic Fang?

Spencer: My main sound was a Kustom 100-watt head through a 2x12 Vox cabinet. It's a great amp, and there's the John Fogerty connection—which is cool. For pretty much every song, though, Judah and I were running at least two amps each, and mixing the tones together.

Bauer: The amp I used the most was my white '61 Fender Twin. I also used a tweed Deluxe quite a bit, and, occasionally, an old Premier amp and an Oahu. For tremolo, I used an Ampeg Gemini.

What was responsible for the crazy tremolo on "Hold On?"

Spencer: I used three amps—the Kustom, a Fender Super Reverb, and something else I can't remember. All were set with different speeds and depths of tremolo.

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ROCK AND ROLL SAVIORS

Did Jordan tweak your tones at all?

Bauer: It's funny—I always set the amps to where I thought they sounded good, but then Steve or Jon would come in and crank things up and make them super bright and more distorted. I finally realized what they

were thinking: To get the baddest sound on tape, you have to *over* do it.

What other setups did you use?

Bauer: We used what Steve called the "Keith setup"—which was my Twin miked with a Shure SM57, and a Fender Bassman that was set on top of some flight cases, and miked with an AKG C451. I normally don't like Bassmans because they're too bright—and raising the amp off the floor only made it brighter—but the sound worked on tape.

Jon, are you still using the same no-name guitar?

Spencer: Yeah. My wife bought it about ten years ago for \$17. She used it for a while, and

then it was just sitting around. I picked it up, and I've been using it ever since.

Bauer: Jon likes to say he doesn't know what make that guitar is, but he does. It's called a Zimgar. Maybe he says he doesn't know because he cut off half of the headstock! Whenever I see one of those guitars around, I pick it up to see if it sounds like his, but none of them ever do.

What is it about that guitar?

Bauer: There's something about the bridge pickup. Someone took it out once to check its specs, but there was nothing out of the ordinary. It's just a real weird sounding pickup. That guitar drives me crazy, though. The intonation is so shot that I've gotten used to bending my strings slightly when we play. At least I know it's Jon's fault if we're out of tune!

What are you going to do if it finally dies?

Spencer: It has been through a lot, but it holds up. I have a couple more, but they don't have the same sound. My main one has such a distinct growl. Maybe after a few years of hard use and a lot of sweat, the spare ones will age and get better.

Was that the only guitar you used for the Plastic Fang sessions?

Spencer: I occasionally used a couple of Silvertones, a Harmony, and, on "Killer Wolf," Steve got me to use an Epiphone.

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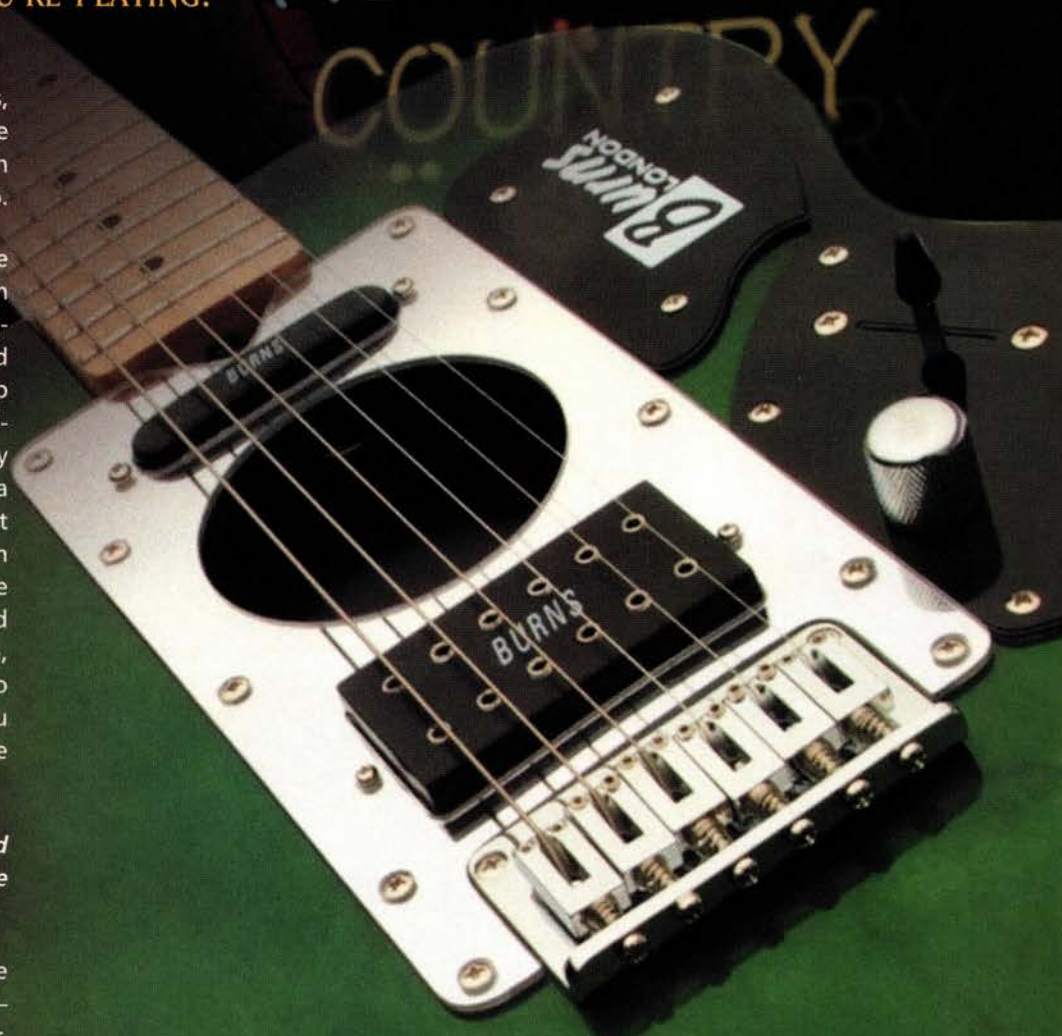
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ROCK AND ROLL SAVIORS

Judah, did you stick with your Teles for the record?

Bauer: Yeah—although I did use an Epiphone Coronet for the slide parts on "Sweet and Sour." I also used a Tele with a neck humbucker on "Hold On," which is the only time I've

ever *not* used the bridge pickup on a guitar. Most of the record is my '51 Esquire. I put a pickup from a '63 Tele in it, and that guitar really started to sound *right*. The tone of the stock '51 pickup was too unrefined.

On "Money Rock and Roll," I used a Les Paul Black Beauty, and that weirded me out. I've always been kind of against Pauls because there is so much harmonic information stacked up, and so much sustain. I prefer the sincerity of the Tele, but after I played the Les Paul, I realized it's a valid guitar [laughs]. You can tell when I play that guitar that I don't know what to do with that much sustain.

What are you guys using live?

Spencer: My guitar plugs into the Kustom head and 2x12 Vox cabinet—that's it.

Bauer: From the guitar, my signal goes to a Palmer splitter and then to my early '60s Fender Concert and a 4x10 Music Man combo.

How do you set each amp?

Bauer: I consider the Concert my Steve Cropper-type sound. I run it on ten, and it gives me a nice sting. The Music Man is a solid-state/tube hybrid, and I use the bassiest settings.

Do you guys tune to standard pitch?

Spencer: I tune the low E to D. I do that cause I can't play barre chords.


Come on!

Spencer: It's *hard*. If I sit and try, I can form one. It takes me a minute, though.

Bauer: I'm using open G and standard tuning.



Does anything anger you about the current state of rock and roll?

Spencer: Not much. I mean, it's pretty lousy, but it has always been pretty lousy. The mainstream is—well, the *mainstream*. There has always been good stuff out there, but you have to scratch and dig for it. The way I look at it is: If you want to eat at McDonalds and have a Big Mac, you can do that pretty easily, but it's not the tastiest thing—and it's probably not the *best* thing for you, either. ■



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Neil Young

Are You Passionate?

There's a timelessness about Neil Young that defies the career trajectory of most '70s-era rock stars. His signature falsetto sounds pretty much the same as it did when Nixon was in office, his lead playing is still wild and punkish, and you can always count on his songs to leave you feeling a little depressed. His latest release, *Are You Passionate?* embodies all of those qualities and then some, as this R&B-flavored album also finds Young cutting loose with some of his fattest and most focused-sounding guitar work to date. Rocking out with a group of ex-Stax session stars—including Booker T. Jones on keyboards, Donald "Duck" Dunn on bass, and Steve "Smokey" Potts on drums—Young makes each song come alive with great guitar parts and some of the baddest tones of his life.

Launching into the opening riff of "You're my Girl," Young sets the vibe with a thick, sax-like tone that's greasier than a slab of barbequed ribs. His Steve Cropper-inspired lines are way upbeat for such an emotional and reflec-



tive song, but the Memphis treatment lets you off the hook by providing the distinct feeling that Young would rather you party to

his pain. But that's not always the case. Witness how his growling, mournful intros forecast the bummers portrayed in cuts such

as "Don't Say You Love Me" and—yep—"Mr. Disappointment." Or how his explosive, feedback-laced solo underscores

Reviews

the outrage expressed on "Let's Roll"—the hard-rocking anthem to the passengers who perished fighting the hijackers of Flight 93.

Young is an unquestioningly great singer

/songwriter, but it's his bare-knuckled guitar playing, as well as the band's immense grooves, that help make *Are You Passionate?* one of his strongest works to date. Sometimes Young sounds like he's backing the Four Tops, other times his fuzzed tones are so low-down and

rumbling that you *feel* them more than hear them. As always, however, it's the simple honesty in his playing that draws you into his world. Young says it perfectly: "All I got is a broken heart, and I don't try to hide it when I play my guitar." **Reprise.** —ART THOMPSON

QUICK HITS

Hank Williams III, *Lovesick, Broke & Driftin'*. Even with guest spots from Johnny Hiland and Billy Gibbons, Hank Williams III isn't upstaged. This is one of the year's best honky-tonk records. **Curb.** —DF

Various artists, *This Is Where I Belong: The Songs of Ray Davies & the Kinks*. A tribute record that lives up to its potential, with contributions from artists such as Queens of the Stone Age, Yo La Tengo, and Fountains of Wayne, and liner notes by Davies himself. **Ryko.** —DF

The Space Cossacks, *Tsar Wars*. If you just can't get enough galloping surf-guitar riffs, these vibey, spring-reverb-soaked instrumentals will deliver all the sand and saltwater your speakers can handle. **MuSick.** —JG

764-Hero, *Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere*. Thinking man's



alt-pop—imagine Joe Jackson playing jangly guitar. **Tiger Style.** —MB

Little Charlie & the Nightcats, *That's Big!* Original blues tunes that sound straight out of a smoky nightclub, circa 1950. **Alligator.** —SH

The Flying Tigers, *The Flying Tigers*. Slamming new rock outfit with hints of the Cult and Cheap Trick mixed in with a modern edge. **Atlantic.** —SH

Jerry Douglas, *Lookout for Hope*. A player of unrivaled skill and taste, Douglas' playing is so moving, you may find it impossible to *not* take up Dobro. It's *that* inspiring. **Sugar Hill.** —DF

Midnight Oil, *Capricornia*. Anger, purpose, magnificent guitar tones, and soaring melodies—an orgasmic album for those with modern minds and classic-rock hearts. **Liquid/BMG.** —MM



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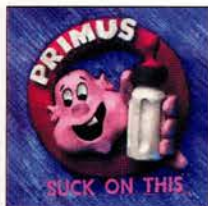
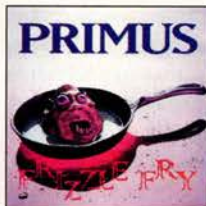
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Primus

Suck on This, Frizzle Fry

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Reviews

Although Primus later scored a radio hit with "Jerry Was a Race Car Driver"—and elements of thrash funk could be heard in more radio-friendly bands such as Faith No More and Living Colour—the fledgling genre never commanded the mainstream. But if you want to hear the *real* alternative rock of the early '90s, these hot encores from Primus won't disappoint. **Prawn Song.** —JUDE GOLD

Joey Ramone

Don't Worry About Me

If Joey Ramone had been a dentist instead

of a singer, rock music would sure sound a lot different these days. Before his untimely passing, the former Ramones vocalist recorded the 11 tracks for *Don't Worry About Me* with guitarist/producer Daniel Rey. What you get is tight, powerful, melodic rock and roll with an edge—a lot like the Ramones, actually. There's nary a wasted note on the whole record. Ramone couldn't have left us on a higher note. **Sanctuary.**

—DARRIN FOX

Drastic Party

Drastic Party

Guitarist Carl Jah proved himself to be a badass during his tenure with the zany Dread

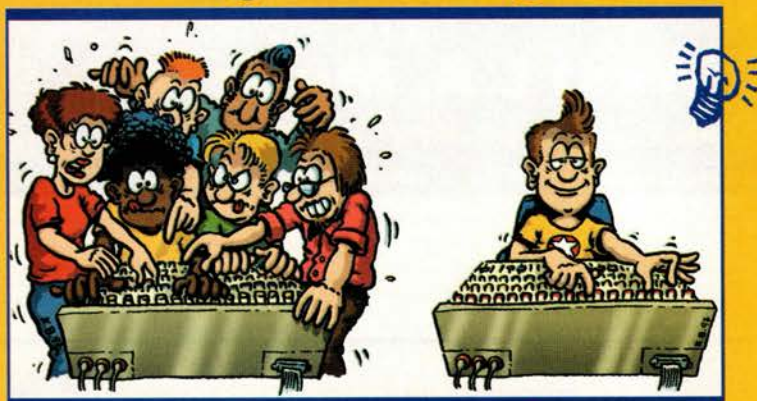
Zeppelin (who played Zep tunes with reggae backbeats and an Elvis impersonator). His latest band, Drastic Party, shows that, in addition to knowing every Jimmy Page solo ever recorded, Jah is a multi-faceted rock player who gets a bunch of great tones, plays interesting parts, and cuts hair-raising solos. He lays down Van Halen-meets-STP rhythm parts on "Coming Up," layers at least six different shades of fuzz on "Parallel Trains," and shreds like the bastard child of Ritchie Blackmore and Albert King on "Woman of Extremes." The vocals can get a little shrieky at times, but the guitar playing makes *Drastic Party* an invite you shouldn't pass up. **Private Skin Media.** —MATT BLACKETT

Goldfinger

Open Your Eyes

Goldfinger blends metal and ska feels with a punk sensibility, yet keeps the "kiss-off" attitude fresh by offering way more than sneers and sloppy barre chords. Vocalist/guitarist John Feldman and co-guitarist Brian Arthur intertwine syncopated lines, raging power-chord slabs, and ghostly background noises. Also, intense grooves abound, refreshing textures weave through the harmonized vocals, and great tones and musical adeptness keep the landscape continually engaging. **Jive/Mojo.** —SHAWN HAMMOND

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Bench Tests

Luxury Model

Line 6 Vetta

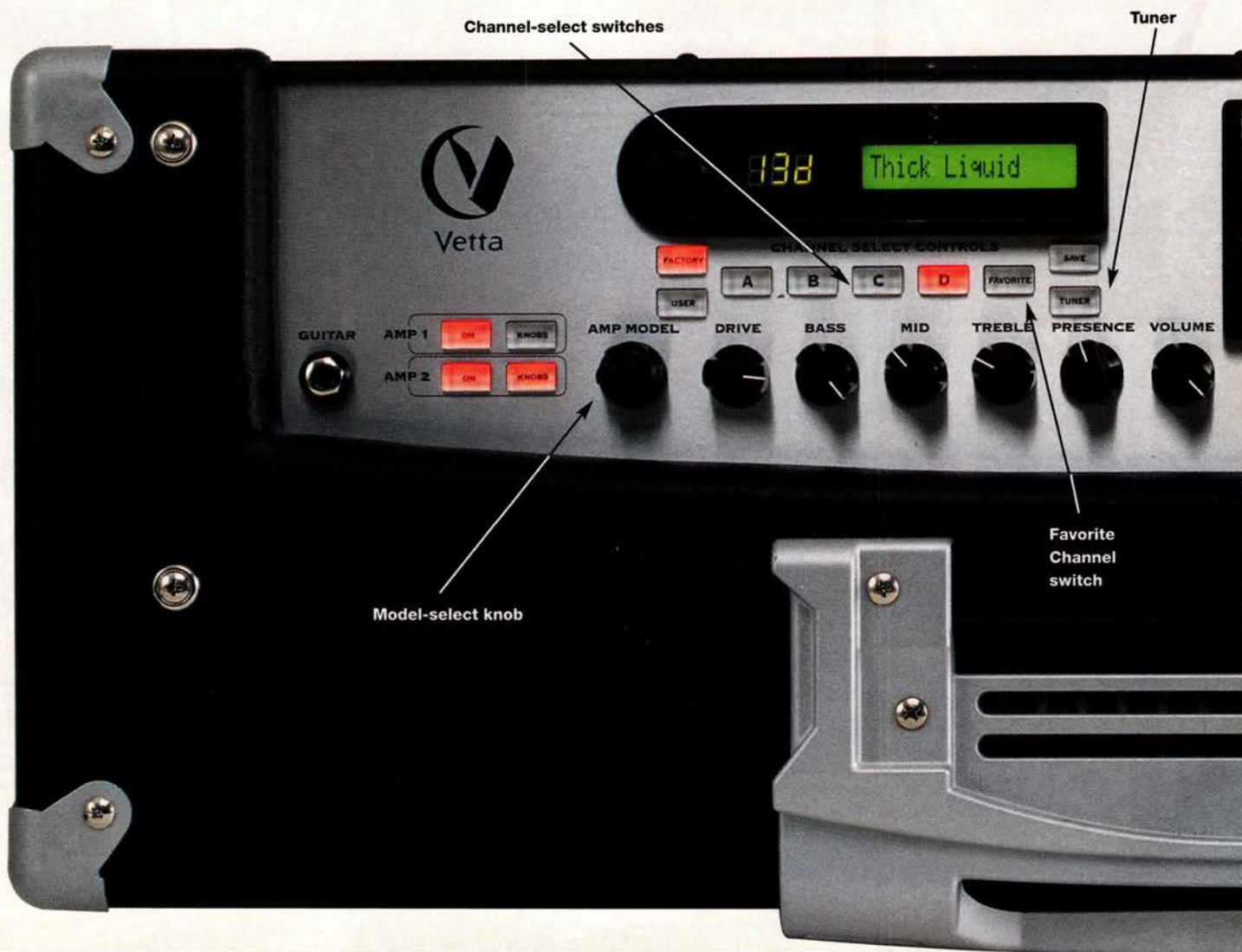
By Joe Gore

Should the ideal digital amp focus on faithfully modeling vintage gear, or should it deploy its signal processing power to create new

sounds? Such questions are now pointless, as Line 6's powerful and innovative Vetta (\$2,399 for 100-watt 2x12 combo or the 200-watt stereo Vetta HD head) blazes new

Snapshot

The Vetta (\$2,399 retail/\$1,599 street) is a great-sounding modeling amp with features such as two simultaneous amp/cabinet/effect chains and the ability to configure effects in any order. Boasting an uncommonly cool palette of modeled tones—including hip pawnshop weirdos—the Vetta wins an **Editors' Pick Award**.



trails in *both* directions. The Vetta sets new digital-amp touchstones for sound quality and processing power, yet it was clearly designed by people who dig low-tech analog gear.

The 100-watt stereo Vetta offers 45 amp and 30 stompbox models (and not just classics such as Fender Deluxes and Ibanez Tube Screamers, but exciting oddballs like the Supro Thunderbolt and Binson Echorec tape delay), 26 cabinet simulations, 128 presets (64 factory and 64 user, arranged in 16 banks of four programs each), two *simultaneous* signal paths (it's like playing two different amps at once), and a pair of stereo-wired 12" custom Celestion speakers. The Vetta is a reassuringly roadworthy unit that weighs in at a formidable 65 lbs, and all controls reside *atop*

2x12 stereo cabinet with custom Celestion speakers



Illuminated effect and setup switches



LCD display with parameter-edit knobs

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Bench Tests

Luxury Model

the amp—an ergonomically savvy design that makes it comfortable to edit sounds whether standing above the amp or seated in front of it.

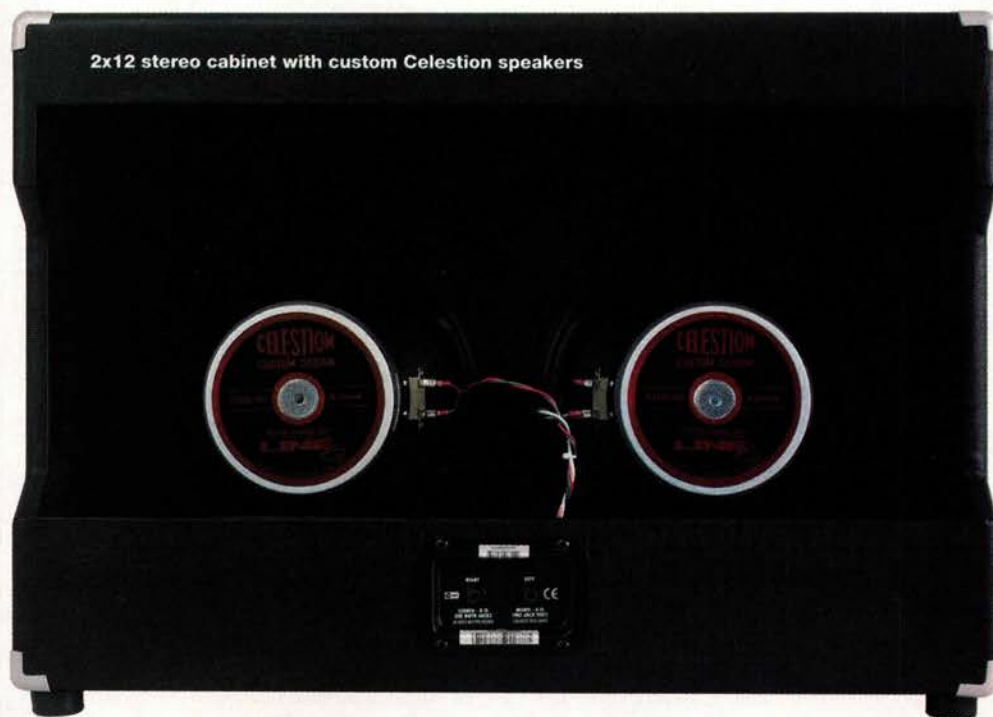
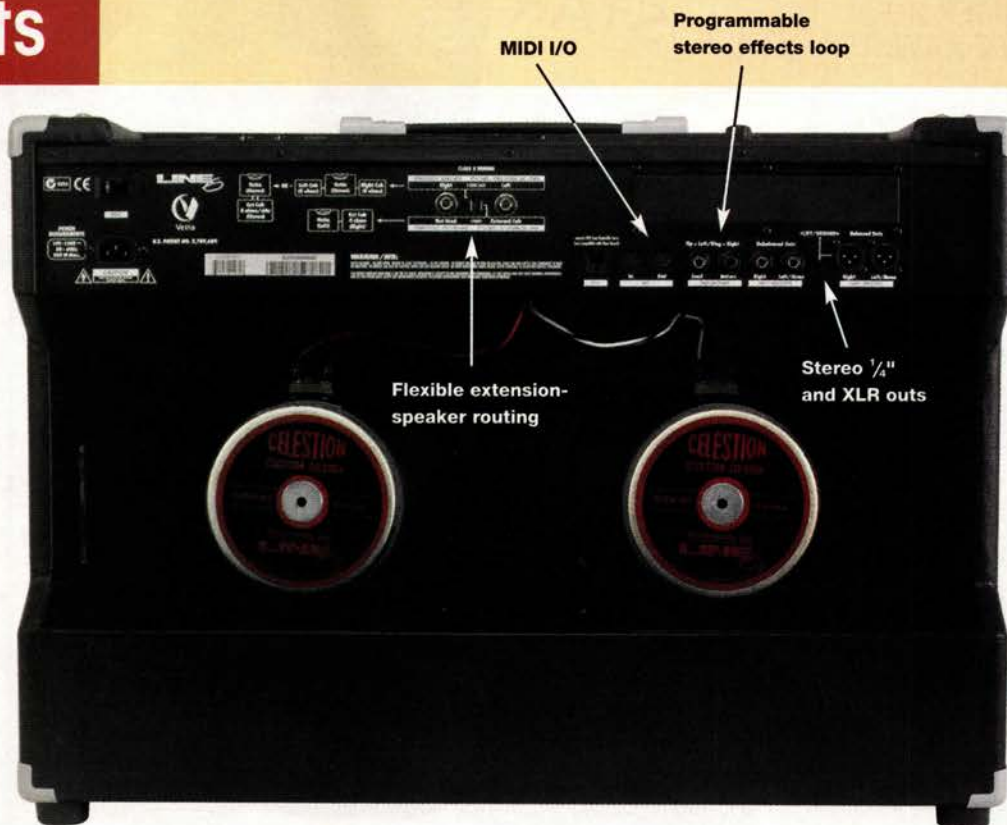
I tested the Vetta with its companion pedalboard—Line 6's FXB/FBV Custom Foot Controller (\$599)—and the Vetta 212S Extension Cabinet (\$549). The Vetta's direct sounds were scrutinized through a Yamaha 02R mixing board and Genelec and Yamaha studio monitors.

Interface & I/O

Only the naïve and optimistic would expect a gizmo this complex to have a no-sweat user interface. But incredibly, it does. I subjected the Vetta to the grueling "Don't crack the manual" test, and it passed with top marks. Credit the ingenious interaction of LCD display and analog-style controls. Most adjustments occur via a set of gain and tone knobs, and because the current control status appears on the LCD screen, you can determine settings at a glance.

You toggle effects on and off with a single button-push. Selecting an edit-effect switch automatically takes you to the relevant screen, and there's always a hardware knob for each onscreen parameter. Multi-page menus are kept to a minimum, and most edits can be accomplished in two or three quick moves. There's nary a cursor or parameter matrix in sight. Lovely.

There are XLR stereo outputs for direct recording, a headphone jack, a buffered stereo effects loop, and stereo extension-cab outs. With an extension speaker connected, you can route the dry



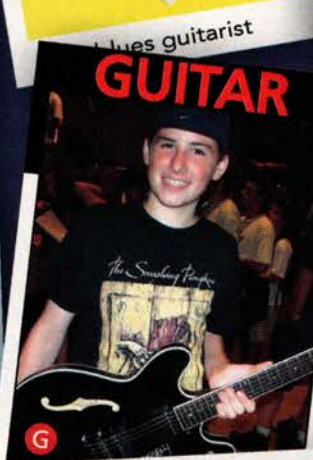
The Ratings Game		Tone	Workmanship	Features	Vibe	Value
Line 6 Vetta		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★

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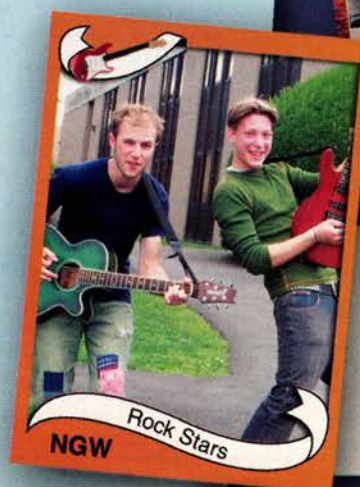
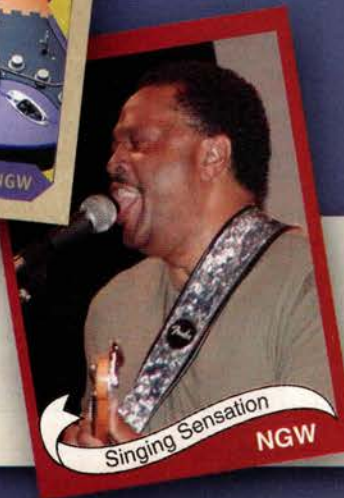


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Bench Tests

Luxury Model

signal to one cab and the wet to another, or—this part's cool—pump one model through the Vetta cabinet and another through the extension speakers. However, the Vetta has no digital outputs—a puzzling omission for such a feature-rich amp.

The Amp Armada

Be they vintage, boutique, or modern, the Vetta models are completely happening. Fenders sparkle, Voxes chime, Marshalls thump, and Hiwatts clang. The big amps thunder, and the small ones threaten suicide by overdrive. The virtual tone controls interact with each other and your guitar in organic ways. For example, when you back off your guitar's volume control, tones change dramatically. Crank the gain and there's an extraordinary sense of revving up a powerful machine. Particularly cool are the lightly overdriven tones that perch on the brink of distortion, just waiting to be

pushed over the edge by your performance dynamics.

Most of the Vetta's custom amp models are excellent. Some mix and match preamp stages from various classic amps for a lively and useful assortment of Fender/Marshall and tweed/blackface hybrids. Others blend over-the-top gain with a pointy, articulate attack.

The Vetta also boasts models of various small, lo-fi, and just

plain weird amps (see the "Vetta Models" sidebar). I've never encountered an expensive amplifier so capable of mimicking the sound of a cheap one—and I say that in the fondest possible way. For example, the snotty little Supro models nail the sound of early Zeppelin, and the low-wattage

Gibson and Gretsch sound-alikes dish up clean country and rockabilly tones with a warm, low-wattage sweat you won't get from, say, a Twin Reverb clone.

Stompbox Fever

The Vetta's pseudo-stompbox effects are similar to those



Dynamic Duo: The Vetta and its matching 2x12 stereo extension cabinet.

Contact Info

Line 6, 29901 Agoura Rd., Agoura, CA 91301; (818) 575-3600; line6.com.

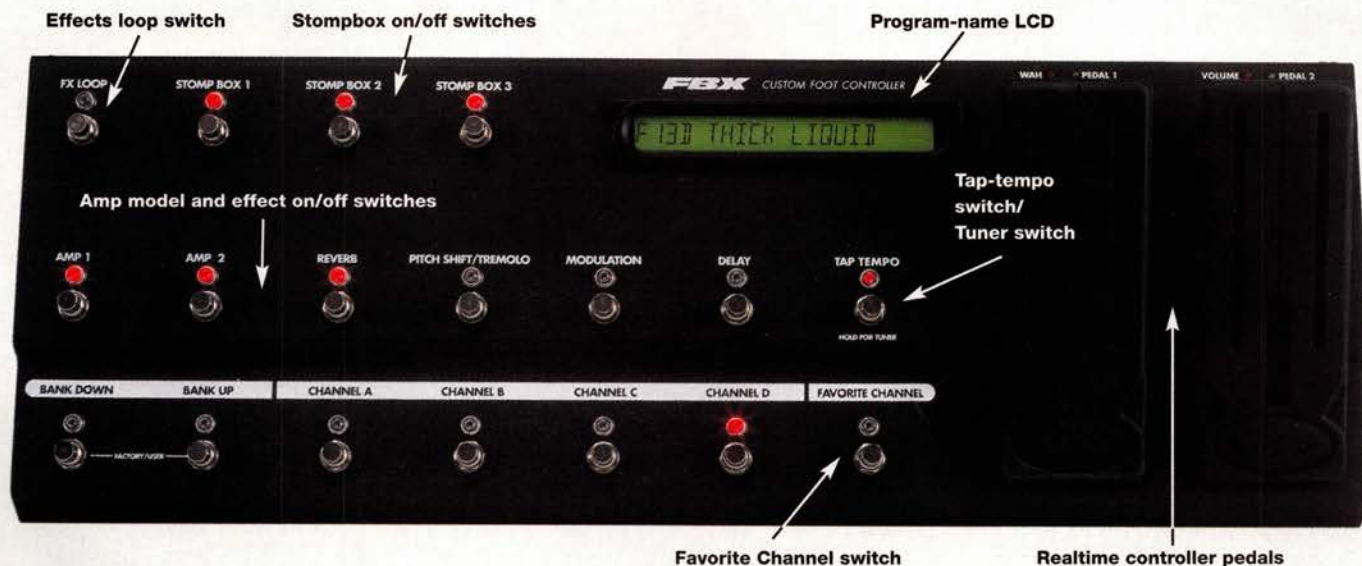
Kissing Cousins

Fender Cyber-Twin: \$1,749 retail/\$1,224 street (reviewed July '01)

Hughes & Kettner zenTera: \$3,499 retail/\$2,499 street (reviewed June '01)

Roland VGA-7: \$1,699 retail/\$1,166 street (reviewed Apr. '01)

Yamaha DG100: \$1,499 retail/\$999 street (reviewed Oct. '98)



Bench Tests

Luxury Model

of the company's excellent modeling pedals. We've covered them at length in previous reviews, but I can't resist calling out a few standout clones: the funky-chewy MXR Phase 90, the realtime reverse delay, the chaotic Roland Space Echo, and the nasty Tycobrahe Octavia fuzz. There are also some welcome new appearances such as the Binson Echorec.

In addition to the stompbox simulations—which precede amp modeling in the signal chain—there's a full suite of post-amp effects, including some tasty reverbs (the spring simulations are uncommonly realistic), tremolo (Fender and Vox styles), EQ (4-band graphic and parametric), compression, noise gate, pitch shift, rotary speaker (Leslie 145 and Fender Vibratone), and delay. Furthermore, you can alter the order of effects in an instant via a simple two-knob interface. You can even place most of the stompbox effects post amp if you desire.

It's Two Amps in One!

The dual-model scheme is what makes

Vetta Models

Amps

- Budda 2001 Twinmaster
- Fender 1953 Deluxe, 1958 Bassman, 1961 Champ, 1964 Deluxe Reverb, 1965 Twin Reverb, and 1996 Mini Twin
- Gibson 1959 GA-18T
- Gretsch 1960 6156
- Hiwatt 1973 Custom 100
- Marshall 1966 JTM45, 1968 Super Bass, 1969 Major, 1987 JCM 800, JMP-1 pre-amp, and 1968 Super Lead in regular, variac, and jumpered configurations
- Matchless Chieftain and DC-30
- Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier, Triple Rectifier, and Mark IIc+
- Roland JC-120
- Silvertone Twin Twelve
- Soldano 1993 SLO
- Supro S6616 and Thunderbolt
- Vox '61 AC15 and '67 AC30 Top Boost
- 15 original Line 6 Models

Cabinets

- 1x6 Supro
- 1x8 Fender

- Two 1x10s (Gibson and Gretsch)
- Five 1x12s (two Fenders, Line 6, Mesa, Vox)
- 2x2 Fender Mini Twin
- Seven 2x12s (Budda, Fender, Line 6, Matchless, Roland, Silvertone, Vox)
- 4x10 Fender Bassman
- Eight 4x12s (Hiwatt, Line 6, four Marshalls, Mesa, Soldano)

Stompboxes

- Six distortions: Fuzz Face, Chandler Tube Driver, Electro-Harmonix Big Muff Pi, Ibanez Tube Screamer, Tycobrahe Octavia, and Pro Co Rat.
- Eight modulation pedals: ADA Flanger, Boss CE-1 Chorus, MXR Phase 90, Univox Uni-Vibe, and four Line 6 effects.
- 12 delays: Boss DM-2, Electro-Harmonix Memory Man, Maestro EP-1 and EP-3 Echoplexes, Roland Space Echo, Binson Echorec, and six Line 6 delays.
- Five dynamic effects: Boss CS-1, MXR Dynacomp, two Line 6 compressors, and auto-swell.

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Luxury Model

the Vetta so versatile and open-ended. This powerful feature encourages myriad tonal strategies, such as deploying a pair of identical models with slightly varied tone settings for a spacious stereo effect. Another fruitful tactic is to pair amps so that each makes up for the other's traditional "weaknesses." For example, blending the ultra-articulate attack of a Roland JC-120 with the spongier mass of a vintage Marshall spawns power chords that seem to spit from the speakers. Countering a crispy Twin Reverb with a greasy, low-wattage combo conjures a country/roots tone

with both slice and swampiness. And because you don't have to contend with "real world" issues such as the mismatched output levels of two different analog amps, you can concoct absolutely surreal effects—the most blatant being a massive metal stack duking it out with a toy Fender Mini-Twin.

In addition, the effect chains are completely independent for each model, so you can superimpose, say, varied flavors of fuzz, lo- and hi-fi delay, synchronized modulation effects, and so on. The sheer number of combinations can be quite literally stupefying. Fortunately, Line 6's hip and tasteful two-amp presets provide a fine overview of the Vetta's twin-toned tricks.

Studio Savvy

Despite its lack of a S/PDIF out, the Vetta is a terrific recording amp. The cabinet simulations are among the best you'll find, and you can even select emulations of several popular microphones. The ability to mix and match amps and cabinets adds more exciting wrinkles—such as the possibility of running a macho metal amp through a 6" speaker, or pumping a pawnshop pipsqueak through a 4x12.

And this is all *before* you start assembling dual amp/cabinet/stompbox chains. The two-amp effect is particularly satisfying when you add an extension cabinet and mic each cab separately, but you also get fine results via the Vetta's stereo speakers and direct outputs.

A further wrinkle is the Vetta's Double Tracker, a sort of "smart doubling" effect that introduces subtle, time, pitch, and dynamic variations between the two modeling chains. It doesn't sound precisely like a two-guitar overdub, but it comes closer than any static digital-doubling effect.

Foot Control

The Vetta comes with standard MIDI connections—so it can be piloted by any MIDI controller—but the most gratifying remote option is Line 6's FBX Custom Foot Controller. The all-steel floorboard offers a large LCD display, dual realtime control pedals, and switches for selecting programs, activating effects, and tapping in delay and modulation tempos.

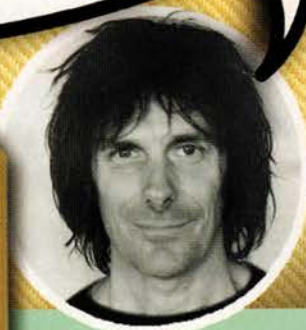
The realtime control options emphasize simplicity over comprehensiveness. The pedals' functions default to wah and volume, although they can also regulate basic parameters such as modulation depth and effect blends.

In most cases, I side with the FBX's keep-it-simple philosophy—especially when you factor in the added complexity of the Vetta's dual-amp configuration. One nice detail: the pedal controllers are far enough apart to be used independently, but close enough to manipulate both at once.

Vetta For You?

The Vetta is easily the most versatile and innovative amp of its type. It outstrips most rival devices in the range, character, and quality of its sounds—offering both vintage and unorthodox amp models *and* enough processing firepower to inspire adventurous users to concoct innovative variations. It's also loud enough for any gig, sturdy enough for the road, and stellar at studio tasks. Add a nurturing operating system that carves a benchmark for low-stress high-tech—as well as unique features such as dual-amp processing and open-ended effects routing—and you have one mighty machine. Prepare to be blown away. 

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Bench Tests

Victory Lap

Hamer Monaco

By Jude Gold

An arched top isn't the only thing the folks at Hamer USA know how to carve. They've also chiseled out a niche in the guitar

market by creating extraordinary handcrafted guitars that put quality before pizzazz. The company doesn't rely on aggressive body shapes, fancy circuitry, or flashy

Snapshot

With its resonant spruce top, balanced tone, stellar intonation, and re-machined Bigsby tremolo, the Hamer Monaco (\$2,699 retail/\$2,159 street) has an irresistible vibe that will win over guitarists of every stripe. The Monaco receives an Editors' Pick Award.

Honduran-mahogany hollow body with carved spruce top



3-way pick-up selector

Tune-o-matic-style bridge

Dovetailed neck joint

Master tone knob

Pickup volume knobs

Seymour Duncan humbuckers

cosmetics to sell their instruments. If anything, Hamer guitars are spectacularly *simple*, and it's their tone and playability that win people over on the first strum. Such is the case with the Hamer Monaco (\$2,699).

Life in the Fast Lane

Like other Hamer models such as the Newport and the Daytona, the Monaco's name is inspired by a famous raceway. With its traditional, single-cut-away body, conservative headstock, straightforward electronics, and gentrified f-holes, the Monaco doesn't *look* like the 6-

string equivalent of a Grand Prix car. But when you strap it on, the Monaco all but sprouts airfoils and racing stripes. Licks, leads, and chord progressions seem turbocharged, and playability is tight and precise. Two things work together to give the Monaco such zip: a speedy neck that sports a 14"-radius, flawlessly intonated fretboard, and a carved spruce top that projects notes vibrantly with minimal effort. (Besides the model tested here, the new Monaco line includes two chambered-mahogany, stop-tailpiece versions: the flame maple-topped Superpro at \$2,899, and the de-tune friendly,

26 $\frac{1}{2}$ "-scale, mahogany-topped SubTone at \$2,699.)

Pit Stop

You practically need a microscope to find a bummer on the Monaco. Its red, transparent finish is smooth as glass, and the ivoroid binding is rendered so well you can barely feel a difference between it and the wood. Aside from some high notes on the first string that fretted out during extreme bends (which I fixed with a twist of the bridge's treble-side adjusting wheel), the Monaco's setup was flawless. Hamer fanatics will notice the pickup-selector switch isn't

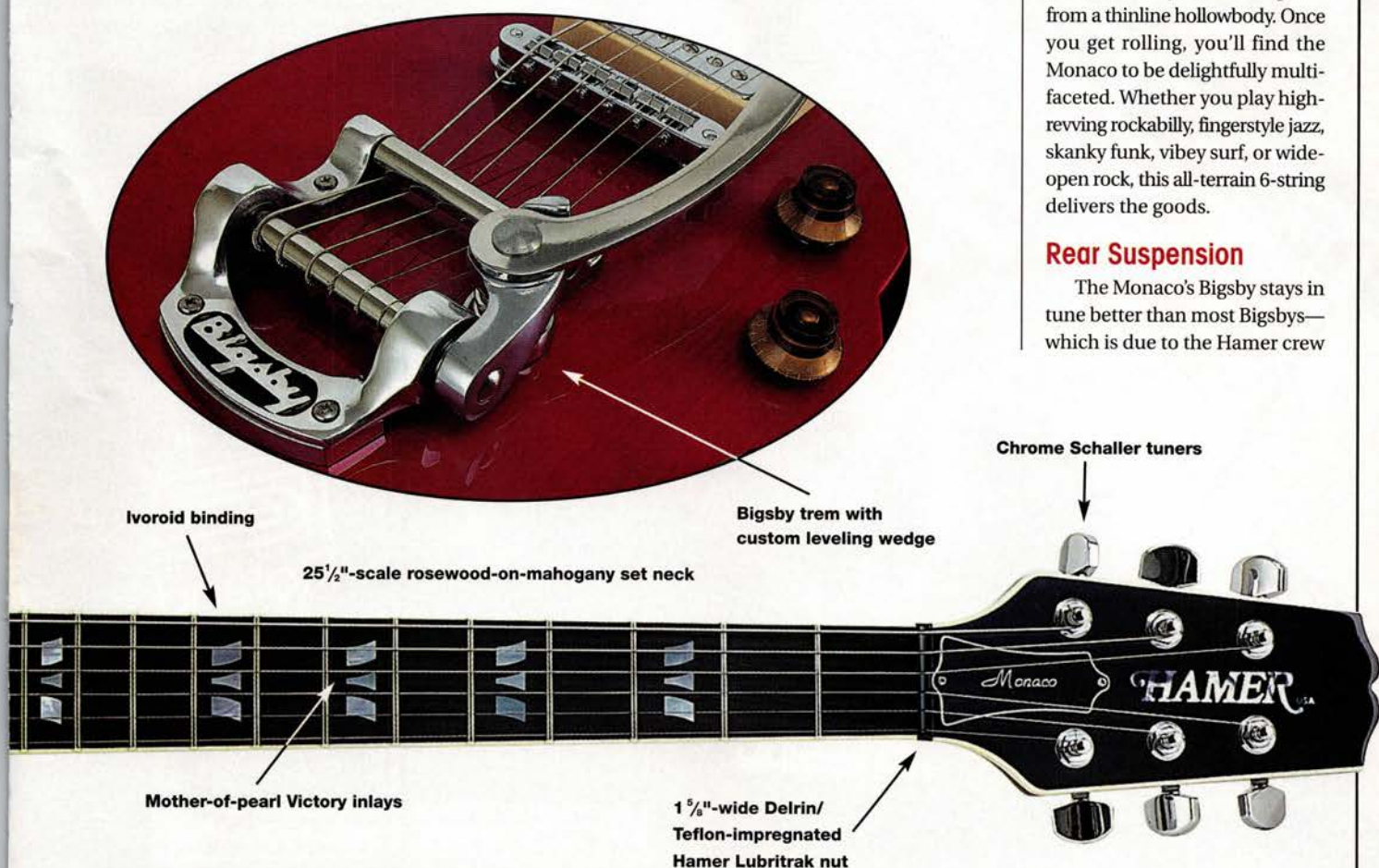
near the knobs, as on many of the company's other models. Although the switch's more traditional location on the Monaco's upper bout looks classy, players who strum wildly may be prone to changing pickups unintentionally.

Ignition System

With its simple controls and absence of Strat-mimicking coil-taps, the Monaco would appear to offer only three basic sounds: neck pickup, bridge pickup, or both. However, the nicely balanced Duncan pickups (Pearly Gates bridge, Duncan Custom neck) provide all the fat humbucker flavors you'd ever hope for from a thinline hollowbody. Once you get rolling, you'll find the Monaco to be delightfully multifaceted. Whether you play high-revving rockabilly, fingerstyle jazz, skanky funk, vibey surf, or wide-open rock, this all-terrain 6-string delivers the goods.

Rear Suspension

The Monaco's Bigsby stays in tune better than most Bigsbys—which is due to the Hamer crew



The Ratings Game		Tone	Playability	Workmanship	Hardware	Vibe	Value
Hamer Monaco		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥

If you were to buy each amp, guitar and effect found in
the new VGA Series amps it would cost you \$27,468.00,
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Simply put, the VGA-5 and VGA-7 V-Guitar Amplifiers feature the most powerful and complete modeling technology on the planet. The VGA-5 offers up an unparalleled combination of amps, speaker cabinets and effects, while the VGA-7 goes a step further by modeling guitars, pickups and tunings, thanks to its 13-pin "GK-Ready" input. And both amps feature bullet-proof construction, straightforward controls, and programmable memories—making them reliable, versatile, and ready for any gig you can throw at them.

The VGA-5 and VGA-7: Don't just look, play 'em and hear the future for yourself.

VGA-7

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- Pickup type and position simulations with pickup blending capabilities
- Instant open and Nashville tunings, plus user-defined tunings
- Mind-bending effects processing
- 80 preset memories plus 80 user memories
- GK-Ready 13-pin input plus standard 1/4" guitar input

VGA-5

- Dynamic COSM models of 11 classic and modern amps, plus 11 speaker cabinets
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* Optional GK-2AH
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Bench Tests

Victory Lap

re-machining the device until the bearings align perfectly, as well as making sure the spring is ultra taut and the trem arm is all but frictionless. The Monaco's Bigsby is great for moody vibrato effects, and, intonationwise, it's nearly invisible when not in use. Bend a string, and the other strings don't drift nearly as much as they do on a fulcrum trem. The Bigsby's "bar," however, is wide and flat,

and players used to instant access to their volume and tone knobs may sometimes find it in the way. Also, changing a string on a Bigsby is still an enormous hassle. Unless you have three arms, it's a struggle keeping the string's ball end on the post until your final turn of the tuning peg.

Scream Machine

Flat-backed like a Les Paul, the Monaco's hollow body wails in the most delicious way when

Contact Info

Hamer Guitars, 20 Old Windsor Road, Bloomfield CT 06002;
(860) 509-8888; hamerguitars.com.

coaxed with a modest amount of gain. Cranking through an AC30's Brilliant channel, the Monaco feeds back musically in glorious octaves, fifths, and thirds. Soothing jazz tones also abound when you plug it into cleaner sounding Fenders and Polytones. The Monaco may be closer to an ES-335 than an L-5, but it works great for everything from fingerstyle jazz to Freddie Green-style swing.

Paired with a Matchless Chieftain 2x12 combo at a full-contact funk-rock gig, the Monaco was completely in its element. Prince and Ohio Players tones were a cinch, as were roaring rock textures à la Malcolm Young

and Brian May. The Monaco's flexibility is outstanding, yet it never loses its identity when you subject it to over-the-top distortion or wacky effects chains.

Checkered Flag

It seems only fitting that Hamer introduced its new Victory mother-of-pearl inlays on this model. With its speed and superb handling, the Monaco is sure to lose many of its competitors in the turns. If you've ever dreamed of a guitar that combines many of the best traits of a Gretsch, a Les Paul, and an ES-335, you should test drive this agile arch-top. It's a great ride. ■

Kissing Cousins

Gibson ES-446S: \$3,650 retail/\$2,699 street (reviewed Feb. '00)

PRS McCarty Hollowbody Spruce: \$3,200 retail/\$2,399 street (reviewed Nov. '98)

Gizmo Alert Smicz TAD 1-Watt Tube Adapters

What's the quickest way to get a guitarist to turn down? If you answered, "Put a chart in front of him," you're only half right. Now you can chop your volume almost as effectively with a set of Smicz TAD 1-Watt Tube Adapters—which are drop-in replacements (no rebiasing necessary) for any amp using 6V6, 5881/6L6, EL34, 6550, KT66, or KT88 output tubes.

Each TAD adapter utilizes an octal tube base that's modified to accept a replaceable NOS 6AK6 miniature output tube. A pair of TADs in a push-pull amp will give you a *peak* power of three to four watts, allowing you to obtain output-stage compression and grind at significantly reduced volume levels. (Although the 6AK6 is no longer in production, replacements are available from Smicz or other vintage tube suppliers).

The TADs come in two basic types:

- TAD-1 (\$40 each/\$90 matched pair). For cathode-biased, class-A amps with one or two output tubes.
- TAD-2 (\$130 matched pair). For class-AB amps with two or four output tubes.



Each TAD type comes in three versions that cover different plate voltages from under 360 volts to 525 volts.

Smicz characterizes the 6AK6 tube as sounding similar to a 6V6, but with a more British-style bite. Installing a pair of TAD-2Hs (designed to handle 361-460 plate volts) in a mid-'70s 50-watt Marshall yielded a thick, grinding tone that compressed readily, yet responded beautifully to changes in guitar volume. The same TADs installed in the outside sockets of a late-'60s Fender Twin sounded remarkably chimy, offering plenty of low-end and a squishy distortion reminiscent of EL84s. Neither amp sounded much like it would with the stock tubes (not surprising, since the TADs strip the bias in these amps, causing them to work in class A), but who cares? The TADs elicit tones that conventional power-reduction devices can't provide, they increase the utility of your amp, and they make it a lot more fun to crank up in small spaces.

—ART THOMPSON

Smicz Amplification, 29 N. Liberty St., Southington, CT 06489; (860) 276-1099; smicz-amplification.com.



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Bench Tests

Crunch Time

Five New Flavors of Fur

By Darrin Fox

The evolution of the distortion pedal is much like that of the automobile. Both retain their fundamental design elements, and both have been tweaked to the nth degree in the quest for greater performance. Evidence of endless refinements are obvious

in the five pedals tested here. These boxes span the colors of the ratty rainbow—fuzz, boost, and good old-fashioned distortion—and each has a unique way

Snapshot

These five boxes parade all the colors of the distortion rainbow, and feature sturdy enclosures and 9-volt power-in jacks: DOD YJM308 Preamp Overdrive (\$105 retail/\$69 Street), Frantone The Sweet (\$195 retail/\$185 street), Fulltone Distortion Pro (\$219 retail/\$199 street), Roger Mayer Voodoo-Boost (\$159 retail/\$159 street), and the Menatone Top Boost in a Can (\$225 retail/street n/a). The Distortion Pro receives an Editors' Pick Award.



Bench Tests

Crunch Time

of dishing out the dirt.

We tested each pedal using a Fender Strat and a Tele, and a Gibson SG and Flying V. Amps included a Fender Deluxe Reverb, a Vox AC30, a 50-watt Marshall and 4x12

cab, and a Bad Cat Hot Cat combo.


DOD YJM308 Preamp Overdrive

The YJM308 Preamp Overdrive (\$105)—an updated version of the classic DOD 250 Overdrive favored by Yngwie J. Malmsteen—

is a basic distortion box with level and gain controls, and a heavy-duty anodized enclosure that houses a single PC board. The construction and layout are clean, but, as per original spec, there's no status LED or true bypass.

Tonally, the YJM is a meat-and-

potatoes affair. It packs a reasonably gutsy output (though not enough for a walloping clean boost), and the distortion is cranky and unrefined with a penetrating treble slice that sounds particularly cool through a Marshall 4x12. The YJM stings hard through

The Ratings Game	Tone	Workmanship	Vibe	Value
DOD YJM308 Preamp Overdrive	♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥	♥♥♥
Frantone The Sweet	♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥
Fulltone Distortion Pro 	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥♥
Roger Mayer Voodoo-Boost	♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥
Menatone Top Boost in a Can	♥♥♥	♥♥♥♥	♥♥♥	♥♥♥

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥



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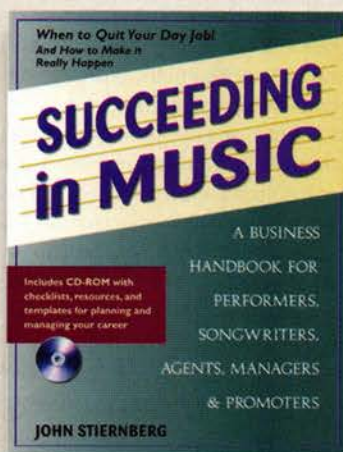
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Crunch Time

open-back combos and—in spite of being tweaked for extra bass—it's rather brittle at high-gain settings. Lower gain settings tame the edginess, and also make the pedal more dynamically responsive. Props to the YJM308 for not trying to be a Swiss Army pedal. It's a stompbox that, for better or worse, says, "Love me for who I am!"

Frantone The Sweet

Entering the scene during the boutique Gold Rush of the '90s, Frantone carved a niche with hand-made pedals that sported stellar construction. The Sweet (\$195), features a cast-aluminum enclosure, a fiberglass circuit board, and chassis-mounted volume, tone, and sustain controls. Other nice touches include true-bypass switching, genuine Bakelite knobs, germanium transistors, and an epoxy enamel finish.

The Sweet is an old-school-style fuzz that isn't ashamed to hiss, sputter, and squawk. Pumped through a Marshall, it yields smooth, violin-type textures with a touch of roughness. The tone control has enough range to dial in full-on "Spirit in the Sky" rasp, and there's enough output on tap to bludgeon an amp. You can get very cool tones by using this box as a booster with just a smidgen of fuzz. And with its tried-and-true style of cacophony, The Sweet

could jump right in as a replacement for one of your rare vintage fuzzes.

Fulltone Distortion Pro

One of the first builders of boutique stompboxes, Michael Fuller set the standard for high-end pedals. His latest release, the Distortion Pro (\$219), is a unique design that features a rugged steel enclosure and a single PC board that bears an ultra-neat circuit. Two mini trim-pots are mounted inside the case for adjusting overall gain structure. What makes the Distortion Pro special, however, is that it packs not only volume and distortion knobs, but also the following *exterior* trim pots that let you really fine tune your tones:

- Resonance. Adjusts overall bass response.
- Voicing. A tone control that adds touches of distortion.
- Saturation. Alters the dynamic response to simulate the effect of playing through a spongy amp.
- Highs. Adjusts overall treble response.

Even before you start tweaking the trim pots, however, the Distortion Pro sounds killer. The distortion knob delivers dynamic tones that range from Robben Ford-like chirp to heavier grind, and the output control can unleash amp-clobbering levels. With some fine-tuning, however, the Distortion Pro really flexes its muscles. In particular, the Saturation control allowed me

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...the previously unthinkable: Run a wide-open distortion pedal into an unforgiving Fender Twin Reverb loaded with JBL speakers. By turning up the Saturation, I was able to morph the fierce attack into a creamy tone reminiscent of a low-wattage combo. Then, by tweaking the Voicing control, I could restore some of the bark and detail that was lost in the process. Amazing!

Unlike most distortion units, the Distortion Pro lets the sound of your guitar and amp really come through. No matter how much gain you use, there's no loss of tonal character and the sound cleans up startlingly well when you turn down your guitar. The Distortion Pro is an extremely versatile and musical distortion pedal.

Roger Mayer Voodoo-Boost

Having designed his first stompbox in 1964—and later creating the Octavia for Jimi Hendrix—Roger Mayer reigns as the elder statesman of guitar effects. The Voodoo-Boost (\$159) is a simple pedal with a very welcome feature—dual low-impedance outputs that preserve detail and sparkle when driving other amps and/or effects, as well as safeguard signal strength through long cable runs.

The Voodoo-Boost sports super-clean construction, a steel enclosure that houses a single PC board, and three controls (output, fatness, and gain). Although the output is sufficient to

kick an amp's front end into grind territory, I could have used more of a volume boost when playing a Strat or Tele. The fatness control is nicely voiced, adding punch and portliness to open-back combos, but it can't compensate for the sizzle that occurs when you run the pedal at high-gain settings. The best tones were elicited by combining low-gain settings with lots of output—a strategy that allows the character of your amp and guitar to shine through, as well as maintain clarity and string-to-string detail.

Menatone Top Boost in a Can

The Top Boost in a Can (\$225) aims to deliver the overdrive characteristics of the venerable Vox AC30—a tall order for a stompbox, as the complex overtones of this classic amp are some of the hardest to imitate. The TBIC's AC30-style controls are mounted to the aluminum chassis, and a single perforated board grips all of the circuit components. You get volume, gain, treble, bass knobs, and cut control that adds top-end when turned counter-clockwise. A killer feature for slicing through a band.

The TBIC produces more gain than you can shake a stick at, but it tends to sound splattery and unfocused at higher settings. There's also an abundance of output, although audible hiss makes the TBIC less suitable as a clean boost—even at low gain settings. Where the

TBIC thrives, however, is in front of a dark sounding, already clipping amplifier. Through a non-master Marshall, the TBIC's powerful EQ let me coax a "second" channel out of the amp. I dialed up a thick, beefy tone on the Marshall, then used the TBIC to deliver a slicing, medium-grind tone. When I turned down my guitar's volume—voilà!—a Vox-like clean tone with chime, clarity, and dynamic punch appeared. The TBIC isn't the easiest pedal to dial-in, but it's capable of giving a one-sound amp a real personality overhaul. **J**

Contact Info

DOD, 8760 S. Sandy Pkwy, Sandy, UT 84070; (801) 566-8800; dod.com.

Frantone, 85 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn NY 11211; (718) 388-2160; frantone.com.

Fulltone, 4220 Glencoe Ave., Marina Del Rey, CA 90292; (310) 821-4500; fulltone.com.

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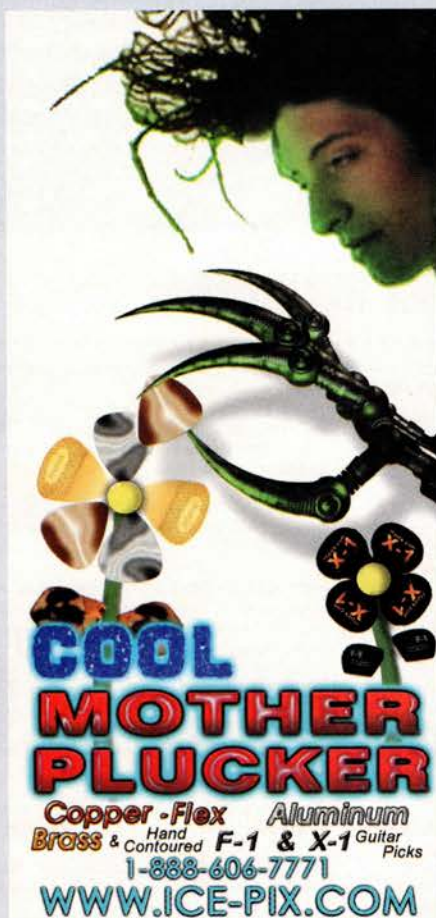
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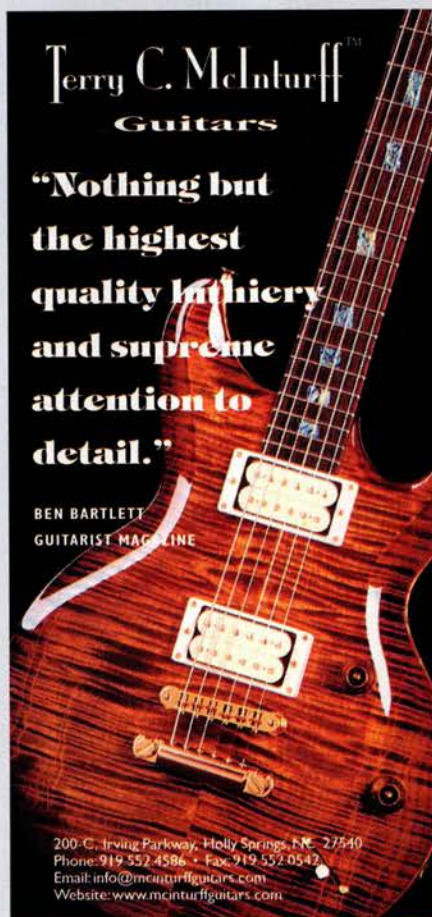
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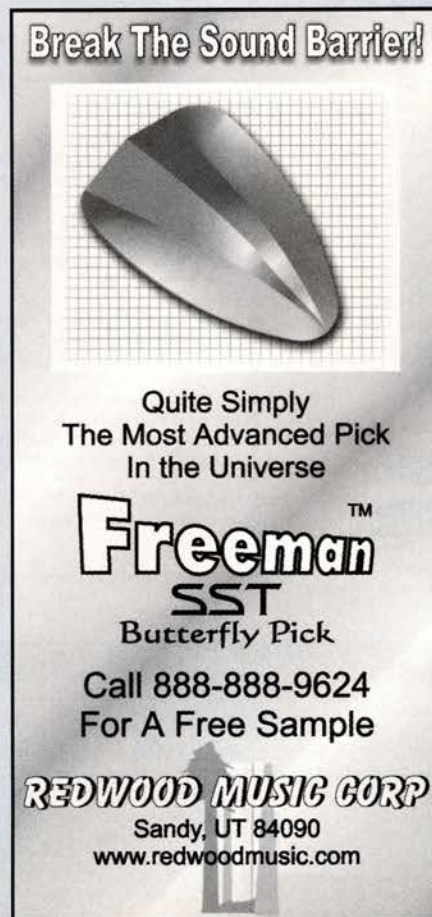
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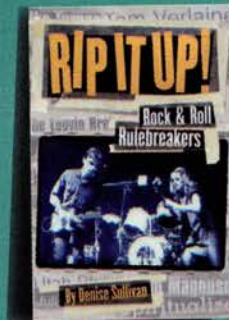
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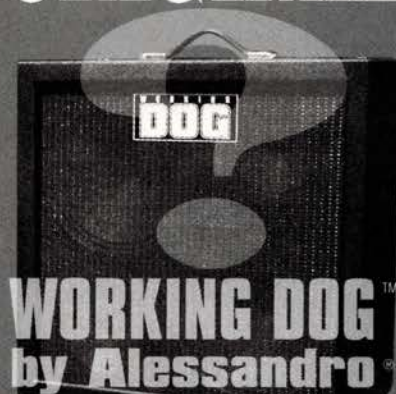
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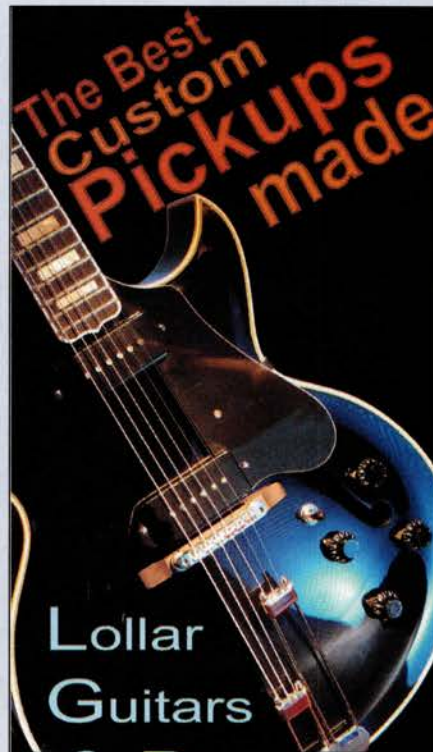
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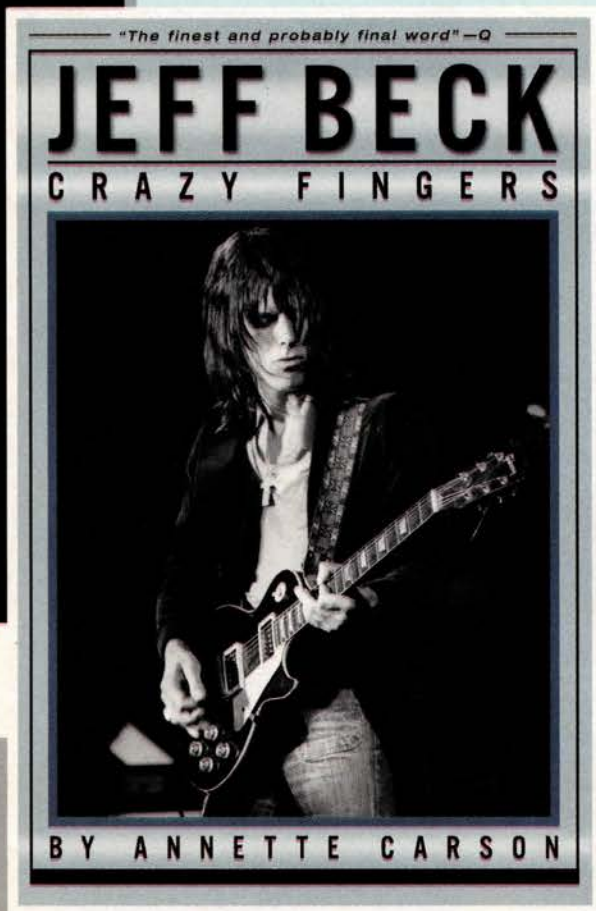
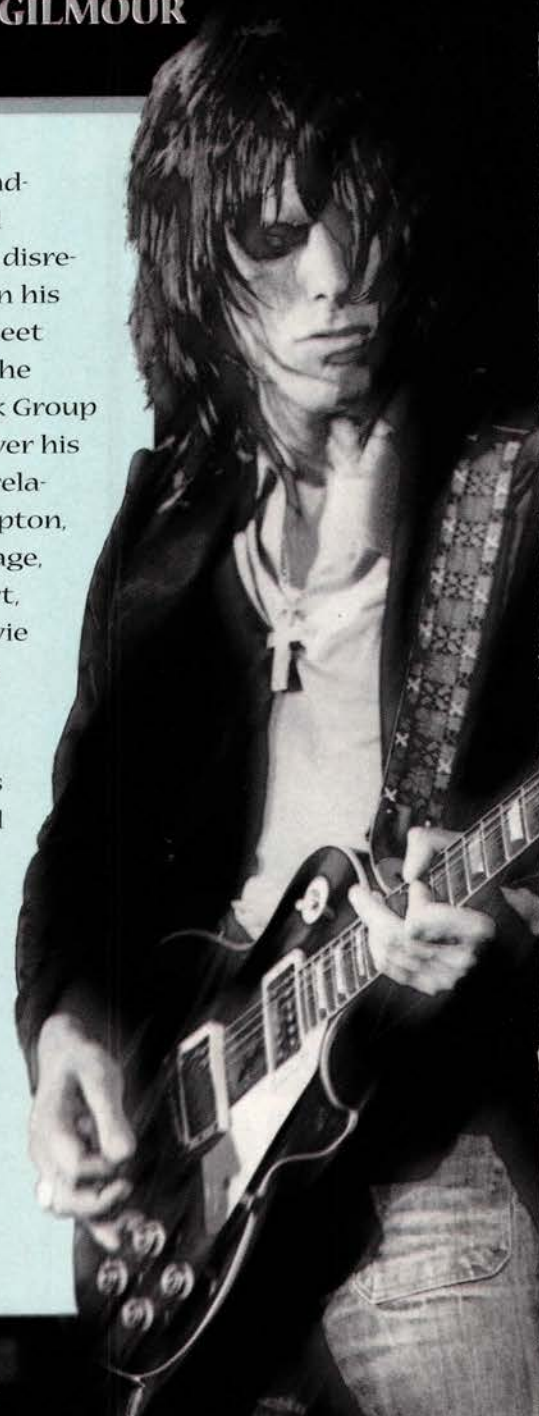
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Bench Tests

Clean Machine

G-Craft MK1H

By Art Thompson

It's practically ordained that any amplifier falling into the boutique category shall be based on either a tweed Fender Bassman, a Marshall plexi, or a Vox AC30. Though most boutique builders have also taken considerable liberties with the old designs, attempts to step out with an entirely new type of high-end tube amplifier have been few and far between.

Now Southern California-based G-Craft has entered the boutique market with an amplifier that is radically different from anything in its class. For starters, the MK1H 3-Band Opto

Snapshot

The G-Craft MK1H 3-Band Opto Compressor/Amplifier (head only—\$2,975 retail/\$2,695 street) is a unique, all-tube amplifier that incorporates such novel features as a low-voltage preamp, 3-band EQ with frequency-dependent optical compression, and a parallel, single-ended output stage that uses three 807 tubes.



Bench Tests

Clean Machine

Compressor/Amplifier (\$2,975; \$3,415 as tested with required custom cabinet—a combo version is available for \$3,295) utilizes a preamp that puts a mere 30 volts on the tube plates instead of the 200-plus volts found in most amps. According to G-Craft, low-voltage operation generates more even harmonics and allows for an extended frequency response. The MK1H's preamp uses two 6DJ-8 tubes—a twin triode once widely used in television receivers, and now often found in high-end hi-fi gear.

Next, there's the dynamic 3-band EQ. Designed especially for G-Craft by John G. Petersen of Tube-Tech (a Danish maker of esoteric studio gear), the tube-powered circuit (which uses three 12AT7s) offers independent variable optical compression for each frequency band. Corresponding LED meters indicate the amount of gain reduction being applied (-10dB maximum).

Output Oddities

With all that's going on upstream, it's not surprising that the MK1H's output section also has a few twists. The fun begins with a 12AX7 driver stage that offers three level settings: Quiet (for low-volume playing), Normal (for acoustic instruments), and Overdrive (for electric guitars). You can toggle between Normal and Overdrive using the front-panel switch, but to access all three modes you must connect a footswitch (or an effects processor's switching output) to the remote jack on the amp's rear panel.

The MK1H's muscle comes from a parallel single-ended output stage that uses three 807 tubes. The 807 is an audio/transmitter tube related to the workhorse 6L6, but capable of taking significantly more juice (up to 700 plate volts), thanks to its top-mounted high-voltage terminal.

The MK1H also uses a custom-wound 150Ω output transformer designed to drive—you guessed it—a custom Weber 15" 150Ω speaker housed in an optional semi-open-back cabinet with sound ports (\$440). G-Craft says that the primary advantage of using a high-impedance transformer/ speaker

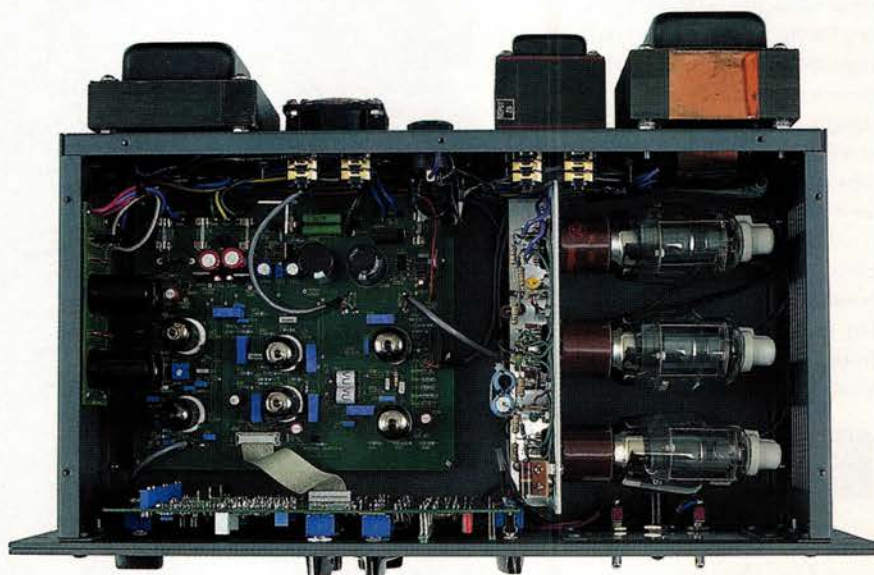
Joe Walsh on the MK1H

The brains behind the MK1 series belong to designer Brian Thompson and guitarist Joe Walsh—who is also a partner in G-Craft. Walsh kindly gave us some insights into the MK1's development, and how he's currently using it in the studio with the Eagles. —AT

"The idea for the MK1 came about after Brian and I were discussing why guitar amps are all so similar," explains Walsh. "They often have the same tubes, the same output impedances, the same speakers, and so on. We decided to try to build something really different, and I think we came up with a great musical-instrument amplifier."

"In my experience, most guitar amps only sound good with *guitar*, but you can use the MK1 with pedal steel, acoustic guitar, mandolin, or fiddle because it sounds so transparent. And having the ability to apply compression to certain parts of the frequency spectrum is great. I love playing my Gretsch 6120 through this amp. I use a lot of compression in the mids to keep the main force of the tone nicely limited, and sometimes I'll use a lot of low-end compression to avoid saturating the speaker—if a speaker is hit with too much bass, it can't reproduce the mids very well."

"I've been using the MK1H with a TC Electronic G-Force in the loop mainly to track rhythm parts. The MK1 doesn't have a definitive tone like a Marshall or a Vox, but the way it highlights the sound of your guitar and effects is really amazing."



The MK1H uses multiple PC boards but incorporates a lot of hand wiring as well. Note the 807 output tubes on the right side.

system is extended frequency response. The obvious downside is that the MK1H can't be used with any other speaker. A special cable

fitted with Speakon twist-lock connectors is included to ensure that only the correct speaker cabinet is plugged in.

The Ratings Game	Tone	Workmanship	Features	Vibe	Value
G-Craft MK1H	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★

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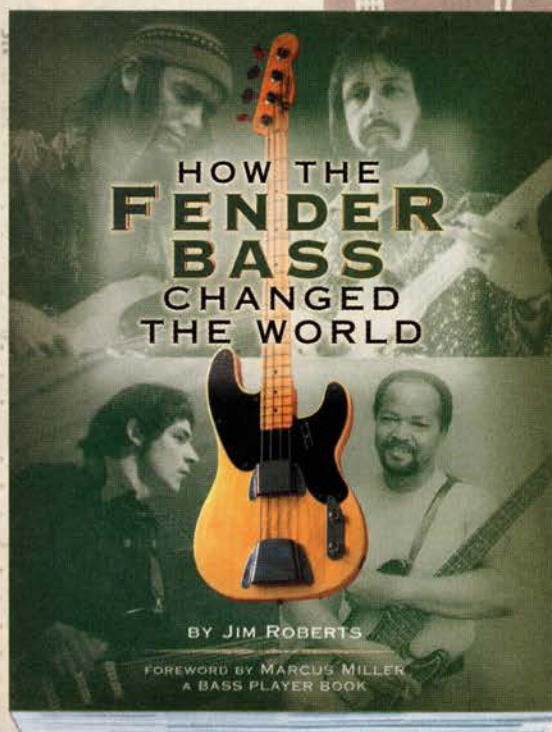
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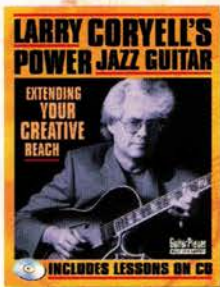
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Clean Machine

Construction

The MK1H's interior is super tidy with the components arranged on three PC boards, and the output-tube sockets mounted horizontally to a separate aluminum plate. A small fan keeps air moving around the preamp and EQ tubes, but it seems to have no significant cooling effect on the 807s. Curious. The ultra-smooth Bourns potentiometers are particularly hip, and their conductive plastic housings guarantee a long, noise-free life. Other details include gold-plated jacks, neatly routed wiring, and a complement of vintage Mullard, RCA, and Westinghouse tubes.

Tones

Designed to add minimal sonic coloration, the MK1H is capable of revealing tonal nuances from your instrument that you probably didn't even know existed. Our test guitars—which included a Fender Strat, a Hamer Archtop, and a PRS McCarty—all sounded exceptionally crisp and detailed though the MK1H. It also made our piezo-equipped Seagull flat-top sound a lot more natural than any acoustic amp we've run it through.

The MK1H is designed primarily for clean playing, and even maxing the volume control

in Overdrive mode elicits only a small amount of output-stage distortion. Running a distortion/overdrive stompbox into the MK1H's front end is one way to get some crunch, but such tones always sounded more clinical and direct than you'd expect from a typical tube amp. Picture running your fuzz straight into a mixer channel and you've got the idea. The MK1H is not a versatile tone machine—hi-fi zealots who abhor coloration will freak out over the amp, but players who also want a mean overdrive tone will be very disappointed.

The amp is best suited for studio work. Despite its 60-watt rating, the MK1H is not very loud, and cranking the gain imposes a less-than-wonderful grit to the amp's stellar clean timbre. If you want to use the MK1H onstage, plan to have it miked and the signal routed to both the house speakers and the stage monitors.

EQ Moves

The EQ section allows you to tweak the tone and dynamic response to suit your playing style. The passive bass and mid controls are well voiced, but, owing to the amp's extended frequency response, cranking the treble knob can unleash needle-like highs. The ability to selectively compress the bass, mid, and treble frequencies lets you manipulate the sound in myriad ways. For example, compressing just the bass

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frequencies elicits a tone that's effervescent on top, yet tight and controlled on the bottom. Squashing the treble or mid bands adds subtle sustain to those frequencies, allowing them to sound more present in a mix.

The high-end tonal sculpting also enhances the clarity and sparkle of signal processors plugged into the MK1H's effects loop. And adding compression to various parts of the frequency spectrum further improves the richness of delays, reverbs, and modulation effects.

What's Up, Doc?

More than guitar amp, the MK1H is a sophisticated, hi-fi compressor/preamp that delivers the clarity and sonic detail of a high-end studio mixer. It's awfully expensive for doing one thing extremely well, but if you're looking for an amp that will translate the sound of your guitar as accurately as possible, nothing beats the MK1H—it's truly in a league of its own. ■

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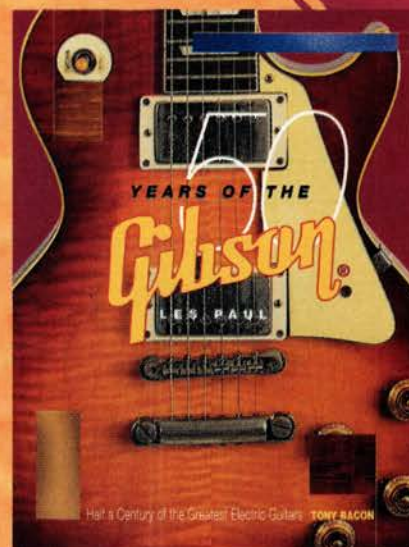
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This 50-year chronicle also spotlights the revised Historic Collection reissues, such as the 1952 Goldtop and 1959 Flametop, and provides a detailed listing of models through 2001. Plus—a section on the Gibson Custom Shop reveals what's behind flashy new signature Les Pauls made for rockers like Peter Frampton and Jimmy Page.



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Bench Tests

Power Preamp

Rocktron Prophecy

By Matt Blackett

Some people love to immerse themselves in minute details, and others just want to cut to the chase. These differing philosophies have been reflected in music gear for a long time. Certain digital reverbs, for example, let you determine the size and shape of the room, the composition of the floor and walls, whether the room contained furniture, and so on, while other units only allow you to select between preset 1 and preset 2.

The Rocktron Prophecy

(\$1,799) lives in both of these worlds. The preamp/multi-effector provides unprecedented depth and flexibility in some areas, and almost none in others. To study the dual nature of the Prophecy, I plugged the preamp into a Mesa/Boogie Simul-Class 2:Ninety power amp and a Marshall 4x12 with Celestion Vintage 30s. Test guitars included a Fender Strat, a Gibson Les Paul, a Hamer Standard (loaded with a DiMarzio Bluesbucker P-90-style pickup), and a Duncan-equipped Dean EVO. I also did

Snapshot

The Prophecy (\$1,799 retail/\$1,399 street) is a 2U, four-channel guitar preamp with highly programmable effects, a flexible routing scheme, and a tremendous amount of real-time parameter control. Boasting a dual 24-bit, 66MHz DSP engine (that can crank out 130 million instructions per second), the Prophecy is the flagship of Rocktron's guitar processor line.

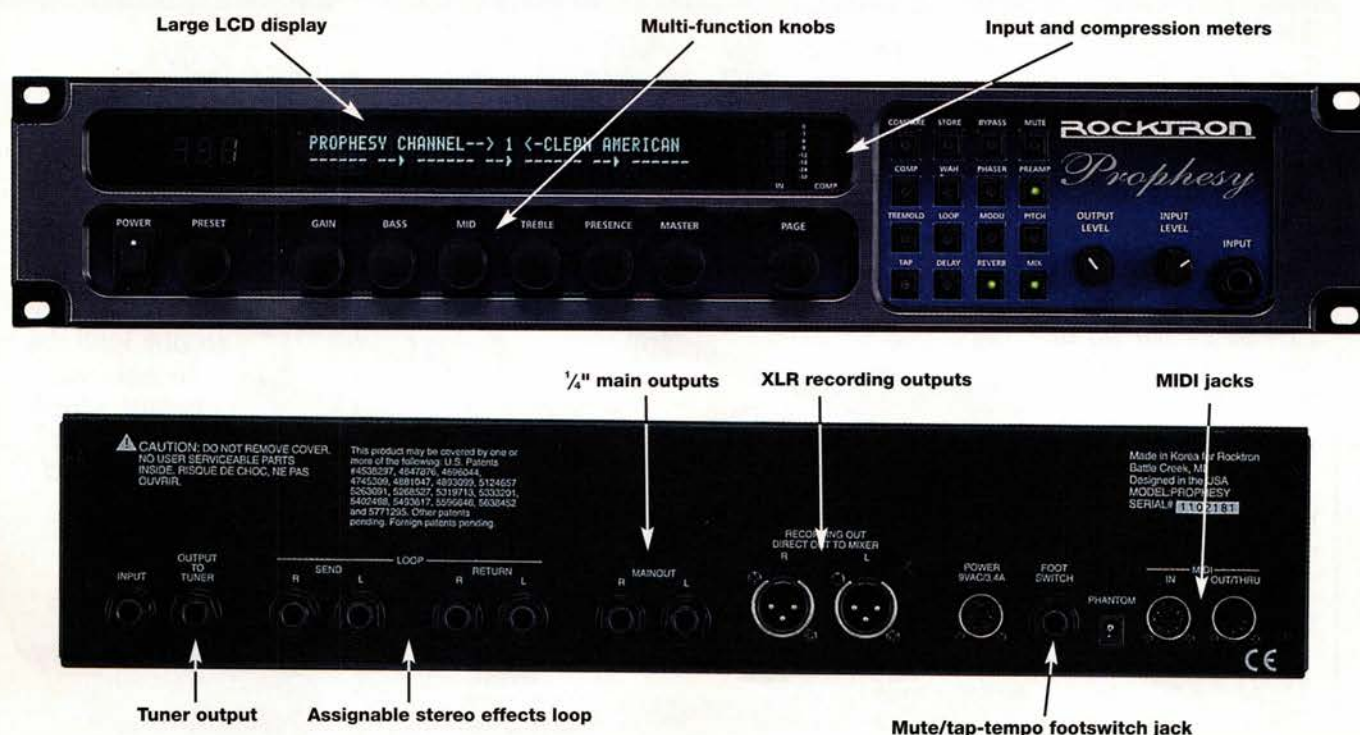
some direct recording to a Roland VS-880.

The Basics

The Prophecy gives you four amp models—Clean American, Texas Blues, Vintage British, and Mega Drive—based on Bruce Egnater designs. You also get ten effects: ducker delay, reverb, tremolo, chorus, flanger, phaser, compressor, wah, pitch shift, and a rotary speaker simulator. The 127 presets can be overwritten by the user, and effects chains can be configured in any order you want.

The back-panel I/O includes an additional 1/4" input, a stereo effects loop, a footswitch jack, MIDI connections, and main

lo, chorus, flanger, phaser, compressor, wah, pitch shift, and a rotary speaker simulator. The 127 presets can be overwritten by the user, and effects chains can be configured in any order you want.



Bench Tests

Power Preamp

and recording outputs. There are no digital outputs—which is a bit of a drag at a time when more and more affordable digital mixers and hard-disk recorders are hitting the market.

The Amp Attack

Each of the Prophecy's four

amp models feels great and sounds awesome. Clean sounds are punchy and ringy, and the dirty tones have a ton of detail and feed back very musically. Humbuckers and single-coils alike maintained all their character no matter how much I cranked the gain.

Dialing in amp sounds can be as simple, or as complicated, as

Kissing Cousins

T.C. Electronic G-Force: \$1,795 retail/\$1,449 street (reviewed Feb. '98)

Lexicon MPXG2: \$1,499 retail/\$1,349 street (reviewed Apr. '99)

Roland GP-100: \$995 retail/\$809 street

Line 6 Pod Pro: \$899 retail/\$599 street (reviewed Feb. '01)

you desire. The straightforward method is to just make gain, tone, and volume tweaks with the front-panel knobs. However, a powerful, multilayered EQ section (with 14dB of boost or cut available) lets you shape the amp tones in numerous ways. You get 2-band, semi-parametric *pre* EQ (for shaping the input signal before it hits

the preamp stage), dedicated 4-band EQ for each amp model, 2-band semi-parametric post-distortion EQ, and a 2-band global EQ for brightening or beefing up *all* of your presets. Although it may seem like overkill, the varied EQ sections make it possible to radically alter the Prophecy's basic amp sounds.

Contact Info

Rocktron (a division of GHS Corp.), 2813 Wilber Ave., Battle Creek, MI 48307; (248) 601-7625; rocktron.com.

The Ratings Game	Sounds	Flexibility	Programmability	Ease of Use	Value
Rocktron Prophecy	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★

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Power Preamp

Effects Action

The Prophecy's effects section is a many splendored thing. It contains a pre-effect slot for patching effects that typically come before any gain stages, such as compression, wah, or even chorus, flange, and delay. Then there are three post-effect slots where you can stick your modulation, delay, rotary, and reverb effects (which most often find themselves post distortion). If you still need more signal-processing power, the Prophecy also features a stereo effects loop that can be programmed into any patch at any point in the signal chain. This is a handy feature if you want to use the Prophecy to control another processor via MIDI, but it also rules if you just want to slap your favorite fuzzbox on a program.

There are lots of options, for sure, and navigating the effect menus often entails some user-unfriendliness. Let's look at adding some delay to a dry crunch tone, for example. Logic would dictate you press the button marked Delay. But rather than hearing a nice echo, the Prophecy greets you with a screen that reads "This effect has not been assigned." You might say to yourself, "Hey, I just assigned it by hitting the Delay button." Wrong. To add delay (or chorus, reverb, etc.), you must scroll through *nine* menu pages until you get to the first post-effect page where your delay will ultimately sit in the signal chain. That's a lot of steps to execute a relatively simple command.

Programming difficulties aside, the phaser and rotary-speaker sounds are thick, chewy, and dimensional, and the wah sounds amazingly vocal—particularly in auto-wah mode. The reverb and chorus effects sound rather cold, however, and the pitch shift seems less refined than offerings from other devices. There are also two conceptual head scratchers: You get five different reverb types, but no spring simulation, and there's only *one* delay offered. In fairness, there are a ton of parameters for the delay—including high-frequency damping and ducking—but I would have appreciated reverse delay and ping-pong options.

Though the Prophecy is a very quiet and clean-sounding processor—even on high-gain settings—a digital model of Rocktron's Hush noise reduction is included. Simple to operate and available on any preset, it's the smoothest noise reduction I've ever used. Even when set to extremes, there was no audible noise-gate chatter. Well done!

For the Control Freaks

The Prophecy gives you plenty of programmable parameters, but it doesn't stop there. Once you write a patch, you can also control up to eight parameters in *real time* with an expres-

sion pedal. And that's not all—the Prophecy includes an ADSR (attack/decay/sustain/release) function that lets you control any parameter via your pick attack. This gives rise to cool auto-wah sounds (as well as triggered flanges that change level or rate based on how hard you hit the string) but it's capable of much, much more. I was able to set up a tremolo patch where the initial chord or note had no trem at all—preserving the transient attack—but as it sustained, the trem would start to flutter in for a dreamy, random effect. I could also vary the speed of the rotary-speaker simulation with my picking, or have a wash of reverb come in only on soft passages.

Although you have to negotiate a bunch of different menu pages to activate ADSR, it's an incredibly musical application that is very different from the usual expression-pedal tricks. You could do some groundbreaking stuff with this killer function!

Studio Grooves

Although the manual says the Prophecy's speaker simulation is only available on the XLR outputs, it can also be applied to the 1/4" main outputs. That's a good thing, because my Roland VS-880 recorder only has 1/4" and S/PDIF inputs. Here's where it would have been nice to have digital outputs on the Prophecy. However, the sound quality through the 1/4" outs was excellent.

The cabinet emulation lets you choose between 8", 10", 12", 15" and full-range speakers—as well as Reactance (the interaction between speaker and cabinet to simulate the response of open- and closed-back cabs) and variable mic placement simulations. The speaker emulations are subtle, but the Reactance and modeled mic positions can drastically thin or thicken tones.

Prophecy Fulfilled?

From a pure processing standpoint, the Prophecy is a tremendously powerful tone-shaping tool. But whether it finds its way into your rig will depend upon what you need it to do, and how adept you are at programming.

I've been working with rack processors since the '80s, and I'm one of those guitarists who *lives* for tweaking. However, I was aggravated by how difficult the Prophecy made it to program and assign effects. Working with the device would have been more enjoyable if it didn't force me to do so much leg work. (When I hit a delay button, I want to immediately hear a delay.) Also, the lack of a S/PDIF output would keep me from incorporating the unit into my home studio.

Still, if you're a player who yearns for *extreme* real-time control—and are willing to invest the programming time to get it—my prediction is you'll go nuts over the Prophecy.

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Entries must be postmarked no later than September 28, 2002.

Please read all rules carefully, and then sign your name in the space provided. If entrant is under 18 years old, the signature of a parent or guardian is required.

1. Each song submitted must be contestant's original work. Songs may not exceed five (5) minutes in length. No song previously recorded and released through major national distribution in any country will be eligible. Songs may have multiple co-writers, but please designate one name only on the application. Contestant may submit as many songs in as many categories as he/she wishes, but each entry requires a separate cassette, entry form, lyric sheet, and entrance fee. One check or money order for multiple entries/categories is permitted. (Entrance fee is non-refundable. JLSC is not responsible for late, lost, damaged, misdirected, postage due, stolen, or misappropriated entries.)

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5. Winners will be notified by mail and must sign and return an affidavit of eligibility/recording rights/publicity release within 14 days of notification date. The affidavit will state that winner's song is original work and he/she holds all rights to song. Failure to sign and return such affidavit within 14 days or provision of false/inaccurate information therein will result in immediate disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Affidavits of winners under 18 years of age at time of award must be countersigned by parent or legal guardian. Affidavits subject to verification by JLSC and its agents. Entry constitutes permission to use winners names, likenesses, and voices for future advertising and publicity purposes without additional compensation.
6. Winners will be determined by January 15, 2003, after which each entrant will receive a list of winners in the mail. CDs, Cassettes and lyrics will not be returned.

I have read and understand the rules of the John Lennon Songwriting Contest and I accept the terms and conditions of participation. (If entrant is under 18 years old, the signature of a parent or guardian is required.)

SIGNATURE

DATE

Bench Tests

Bizarre Beauty

Burns Steer

By Michael Molenda

Looking like a weapon from The Rock's *Scorpion King* flick that was forged by a team of set designers from *Mad Max* and *Frankenstein*, the Burns Steer (\$730) ain't exactly a supermodel. In fact, upon spying the guitar in my office, some staffers immediately started bagging on the poor thing, and laughed outright at the green band on the back of its neck. (Some said it looked like the spray-painted racing stripe on a Soapbox Derby racer, while others likened the finish to the hue of cheap maracas found in Tijuana tourist traps.) But the slamfests stopped as soon as an editor picked up the Steer and started playing. In true *Beauty and the Beast* fashion, once a player got to know the Steer, it was hard not to fall in love with it.

The Beef

The Steer's soundhole gives the impression it's a semi-hollowbody, but that's a bit of a psyche out. Excepting two very tiny chambers at the top and bottom

Snapshot

The Burns Steer
(\$730 retail/

\$460 street) delivers awesome tonal diversity and melt-in-your-hands playability. This wacky looking wonder wins an **Editors' Pick Award**.



Bench Tests

Bizarre Beauty

of the soundhole, the guitar is a particularly *solid* solidbody. All the controls are battened-down tighter than F-18s on a storm-

tossed aircraft carrier, and the instrument's overall heft ensures it could exit unscathed from a Saturday night bar fight. The moderately polished, jumbo frets are well seated into the neck, but the

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neck-to-body joint has a big gap on the treble side. The review model—which was not set up by the distributor because *GP* asked to get one of the very first Steers that arrived in the States—also exhibited some cosmetic scratches and sloppy paint inside the soundhole cavity. (Burns states these blemishes will not appear on retail models.) The string

guides on the earwig-shaped headstock are merely decorative.

Ride 'em!

The Steer has an extremely seductive feel, and its playability always makes a huge impression on whoever picks it up. The neck invites speedy riffing, funky chunking, punk chording, stratospheric bends, and every

The Ratings Game	Tone	Playability	Workmanship	Hardware	Vibe	Value
Burns Steer 	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥

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Bizarre Beauty

other trick and lick you can devise. And it doesn't matter whether you sit or stand—in all playing positions, the Steer seems to melt into your body. The controls are ergonomically placed—with the exception of a pickup selector that's in harm's way of frenetic strumming. Fingerpickers who anchor their pinky on the body may risk a bit of a scratch from the edge of the Steer's mirrored pickguard, but, otherwise, the guitar is an absolute joy to play.


Steer Tones

The Steer's sound is mindblowing. It can cover so much sonic ground you'll think you have an entire herd of guitars in your hands, and every tone is full of life, clarity, and vibe-o-liciousness. The Steer's main feature, however, is crystalline detail. Every note shimmers with impact and weight. The Steer never veers into the shrill zone, and yet clean tones sound so expansive it's as if they're bouncing inside your skull. Even massively saturated timbres ring with "I-can-hear-every-note" precision.

For a film soundtrack session where I had to cover a bunch of different textures, I brought an arsenal of guitars, and ended up leaving them in their cases. The versatile Steer brilliantly enhanced ambient washes, spitty "garbage-band" progressions, bluesy stings, sparkling arpeggios, and EBow excursions. Even though I *knew* I played the Steer on every track, if I closed my eyes during playback, I might swear I had switched between my Fender Strat, G&L ASAT Classic, and Gibson Les Paul. Admittedly, the guitar's chameleon-esque nature was aided by plugging into different sonic tools—direct through a Jennings JD1 direct box, a Korg AX1000G, and a DigiTech GNX1, and by miking a Vox AC15 and a Marshall JCM 800 combo—but it still produced delicious single-coil, full-on humbucker, and pingy out-of-phase sounds.

Onstage through a 30-watt Bad Cat Hot Cat, the Steer simply *roared*. The low end articulation is excellent, but you can still get a room-rattling bass bloom by working the tone control. Treble sounds can be tailored to snap, snarl, or bite simply by popping the coil-tap switch and shifting the pickup selector. The Steer practically begs you to dial in new colors on the fly, and that's a glorious way to keep a smile on your face throughout a gig.

No Bum Steer

The Steer gives you a mother lode of musicality for \$730, and it feels so good to play. It's certainly not a conventional looking guitar, but if you're okay hanging with the strange and the exotic, the Steer will reward you with a virtual stampede of tremendous tones. 

FRANK VIGNOLA

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It all started as a sort of teenage rivalry...

I'd slave at the piano for five hours daily. Linda practiced far less. Yet somehow she always shined as the star performer at our school. It was frustrating. *What does she have that I don't?* I'd wonder.

Linda's best friend, Sheryl, bragged on and on to me, adding more fuel to my fire. "You could never be as good as *Linda*," she would taunt. "*Linda's* got *Perfect Pitch*."

"What's *Perfect Pitch*?" I asked.

Sheryl gloated about some of Linda's uncanny abilities: how she could name *exact tones and chords*—all *BY EAR*; how she could sing any tone—from *mere memory*; how she could play songs—after just *hearing* them!

My heart sank. *Her fantastic EAR is the key to her success.* How could I ever hope to compete with her?

But it bothered me. Did she *really* have *Perfect Pitch*? I finally asked Linda point-blank if it was true.

"Yes," she nodded to me aloofly.

But *Perfect Pitch* was too good to believe. I rudely pressed. "*Can I test you sometime?*"

"OK," she replied.

Now she'd eat her words...

My plot was ingeniously simple: When Linda least suspected, I challenged her to name tones—*by ear*.

I made her stand so she could not see the piano keyboard. I made sure other classmates could not help her. I set up everything perfectly so I could expose her *Perfect Pitch* claims as a ridiculous joke.

With silent apprehension, I selected a tone to play. (She'll never guess F#!)

I had barely touched the key.

"F#," she said. I was astonished.

I played another tone.

"C," she announced, not stopping to think.

Frantically, I played more tones, skipping here and there all over the keyboard. But somehow she knew the pitch each time. She was *AMAZING!*

"Sing an E♭," I demanded, determined to mess her up. She sang a tone. I checked her on the keyboard—but she was right on!

Now I started to boil.

I called out more tones, trying hard to make them increasingly difficult. Still she sang each note perfectly on pitch.

I was totally boggled. "*How in the world do you do it?*" I blurted.

"I don't know," she

sighed. And that was all I could get out of her!

The dazzle of *Perfect Pitch* hit me like a ton of bricks. My head was dizzy with disbelief. Yet from then on, I knew that *Perfect Pitch* was real.

I couldn't figure it out...

"How does she *DO* it?" I kept asking myself. On the other hand, why can't *everyone* recognize tones by ear? It dawned on me: people call themselves *musicians* and yet they can't tell a C from a C#? Or A major from F major?! That's as strange as a



"How in the world do you do it?" I blurted. I was totally boggled. (age 14, 9th grade)

portrait painter who can't name the colors of paint on his palette! It all seemed odd and contradictory.

Humiliated and puzzled, I went home to work on this problem. At age 14, this was a hard nut to crack.

You can be sure I tried it for myself. With a little sweet-talking, I would get my three brothers and two sisters to play tones for me—to name by ear. But it turned into a guessing game I just couldn't win.

Day after day I tried to learn *Perfect Pitch*. I would play a tone *over and over* to make it stick in my head. But later I couldn't remember any of them. And I couldn't recognize any of the tones by ear. Somehow they all sounded the same after awhile; how were you supposed to know which was which—just by *listening*?

I would have done anything to have an ear like Linda, but it was way beyond my reach.

So, finally, I gave up.

Then it happened...

It was like a miracle... a twist of fate... like finding the lost Holy Grail. Once I stopped *straining* my ear, I started to listen *NATURALLY*. Then the incredible secret to *Perfect Pitch* jumped right into my lap.

I began to notice faint "colors" within the tones. Not *visual* colors, but colors of *pitch*, colors of *sound*. They had always been there. But this was the first time I had ever really "let go"—and *listened*—to discover these subtle differences.

Soon—to my own disbelief—I too could recognize the tones by ear! It was simple. I could hear how F# sounds one way, while B♭ has a *totally different sound*—sort of like "hearing" red and blue!

The realization struck me: **THIS IS PERFECT PITCH!** This is how Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart could mentally envision their masterpieces—and

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know tones, chords, and keys—all by ear!

It was almost childish—I felt sure that *anyone* could unlock their own Perfect Pitch by learning this simple secret of “color hearing.”

Bursting with excitement, I went to tell my best friend, Ann (a flutist).

She *laughed* at me. “You have to be *born* with Perfect Pitch,” she asserted. “You can’t *develop* it.”

“You don’t understand Perfect Pitch,” I countered.

I showed her how to listen. Timidly, she confessed that she too could hear the pitch colors. With this jump start, Ann soon realized that she had also gained Perfect Pitch for herself.

We became instant celebrities. Classmates loved to call out tones for us to magically sing from thin air. They played chords for us to name by ear. They quizzed us on what key a song was in. Everyone was endlessly fascinated with our “supernatural” powers, yet to Ann and me, it was just normal.

Back then I never dreamt I would later cause such a stir in the academic world. But as I entered college and started to explain my discovery, many professors *laughed* at me.

“You must be *born* with Perfect Pitch,” they’d say. “You can’t *develop* it.”

I would listen politely. Then I’d reveal the simple secret—so they could hear it for themselves. You’d be surprised how fast they changed their tune!

In college, my so-called “perfect ear” allowed me to skip over two required music courses. Perfect Pitch made *everything* easier for me—my ability to perform, compose, arrange, transpose, improvise, sight-read (because—without looking—you’re sure you’re playing the correct tones)—and my *enjoyment* of music skyrocketed. I learned that music is very definitely a **HEARING** art.

Oh, so you must be wondering *what happened with Linda?* Please excuse me, I’ll have to backtrack...

It was now my senior year of high school. I was nearly 18. In these three-and-a-half years with Perfect Pitch, my piano teacher insisted I had made ten years of progress. And I had. But my youthful ambition still wasn’t satisfied. I needed one more

each spring, complete with judges and awards. To my horror, they scheduled me that year as the *grand finale* of the entire event.

The day arrived. Linda gave her usual sterling performance. She would be tough to match, let alone surpass. But my turn finally came, and I went for it.

Slinking to the stage, I sat down and played my heart out. The applause was overwhelming.

Later, posted on the bulletin board, I discovered my score of A+ in the most advanced performance category.

Linda got an A. Sweet victory was music to my ears—mine at last!

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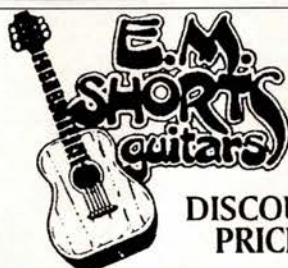
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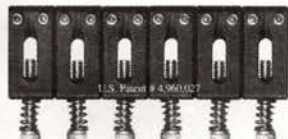
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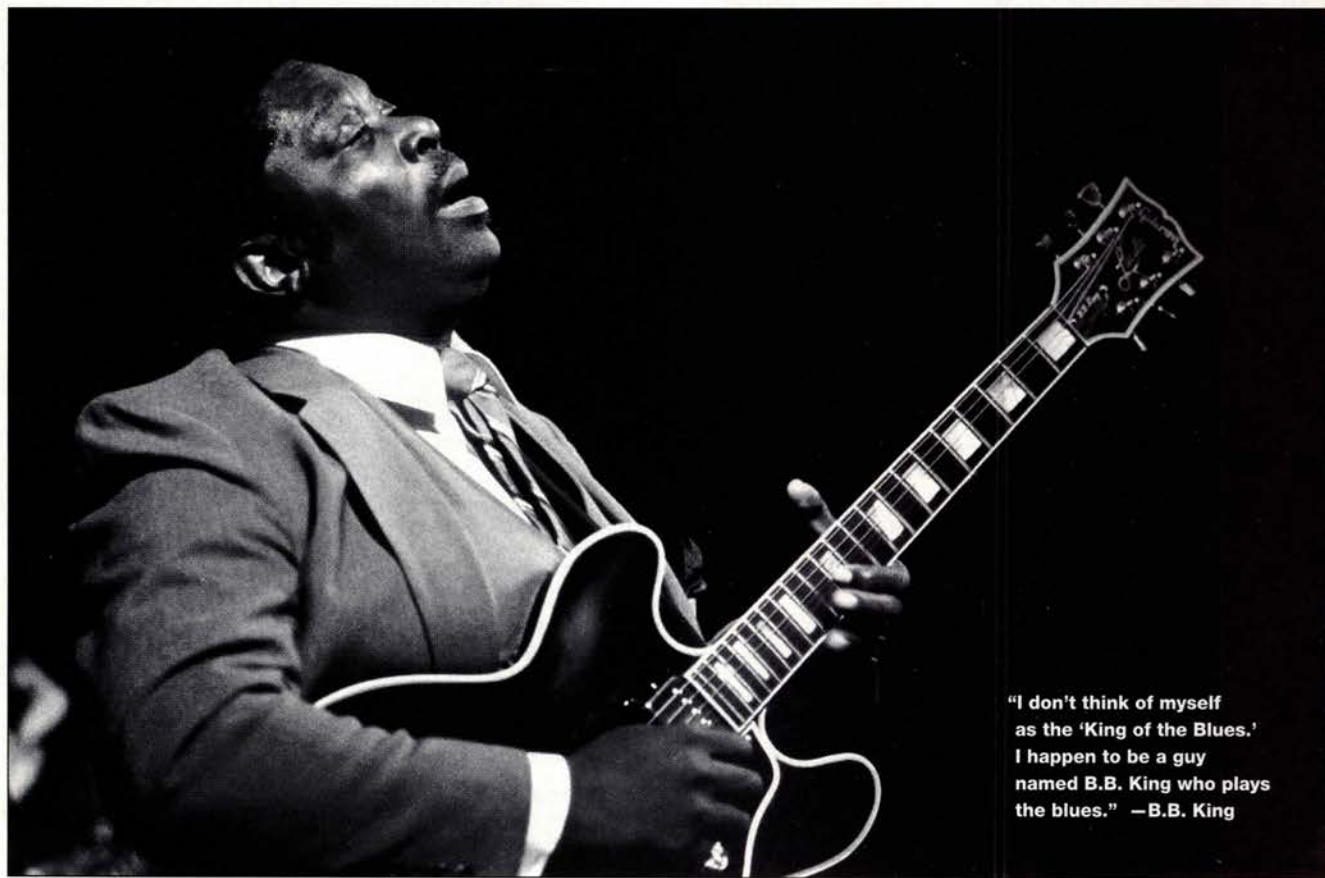
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"I don't think of myself as the 'King of the Blues.' I happen to be a guy named B.B. King who plays the blues." —B.B. King



GUITAR PLAYER, SEPTEMBER

1980. When *Guitar Player* ran an extensive cover story on B.B. King, it was many guitarists' first glimpse into the history and philosophy of the man who came to be called the "King of the Blues." Aside from providing insights into his own artistry, he reflected on matters of race, stereotypes, and how music brings people together.

—TOM WHEELER

• • • • •

When did you first begin playing professionally?

In the mid '40s, in Indianola, Mississippi, on the corner of Church and Second. It's what they called "across the tracks." I never passed the hat, but people knew I'd appreciate a dime if I played a tune they requested. I'd make more money in an evening than I'd make all week driving tractors.

What did your family think of you playing the blues when you started?

I was a spiritual singer, and they wouldn't go for the blues—not around the house! A few of the spiritual people liked the blues,

but they would play *their* blues after midnight, when nobody else could hear. But a few devils like myself would listen to anything. I was singing spirituals, but I'd love to go to juke joints.

Have the attitudes of black people towards the blues changed over the years?

They're changing. There was a time, however, when we were made to feel like we were the only ones with dirty clothes in the closet. Among the upper class, only a precious few would acknowledge my kind of music in the early days. The regular working class people understood, but the middle class were made to be ashamed of the blues. Today they're listening more.

How widespread is racial prejudice in show business?

It still happens. It's a natural fact. I've been lucky, though. A lot of good things have happened for me, and a lot of good things have happened for a lot of blacks. But when you compare that to what's happening for the whites, it's a great big difference. Fortunately, it has gotten much better. We're getting there. The problem is never with the musicians. Even when it was very segregated down

south, the players always got together and had a good time.

You once selected a performance venue located between black and white neighborhoods to draw a racially mixed audience.

Yeah, I got 'em all. We never would have had any segregation if people would have had enough music around.

Do you still encounter the attitude that people think you have to be poor—or high on something—to be a blues player?

That image that people put on us is *wrong*. Blues is like any other kind of music. Some of us excel, and some of us don't. Red, white, black, brown, rich, poor—we all have the blues. I have been fortunate, and yet now I have more to sing about than I ever did. I see what's happening in this country and around the world. Money troubles, food is running low. I go to the prisons and see what's happening there. Look at Asia, Cambodia. I think of my people—the ones I left behind in Mississippi, and all the people in *all* the Mississippis. We are a part of each other, you know. When I see their condition, I know what they feel, and it hurts. My blues mean more to me now than ever.



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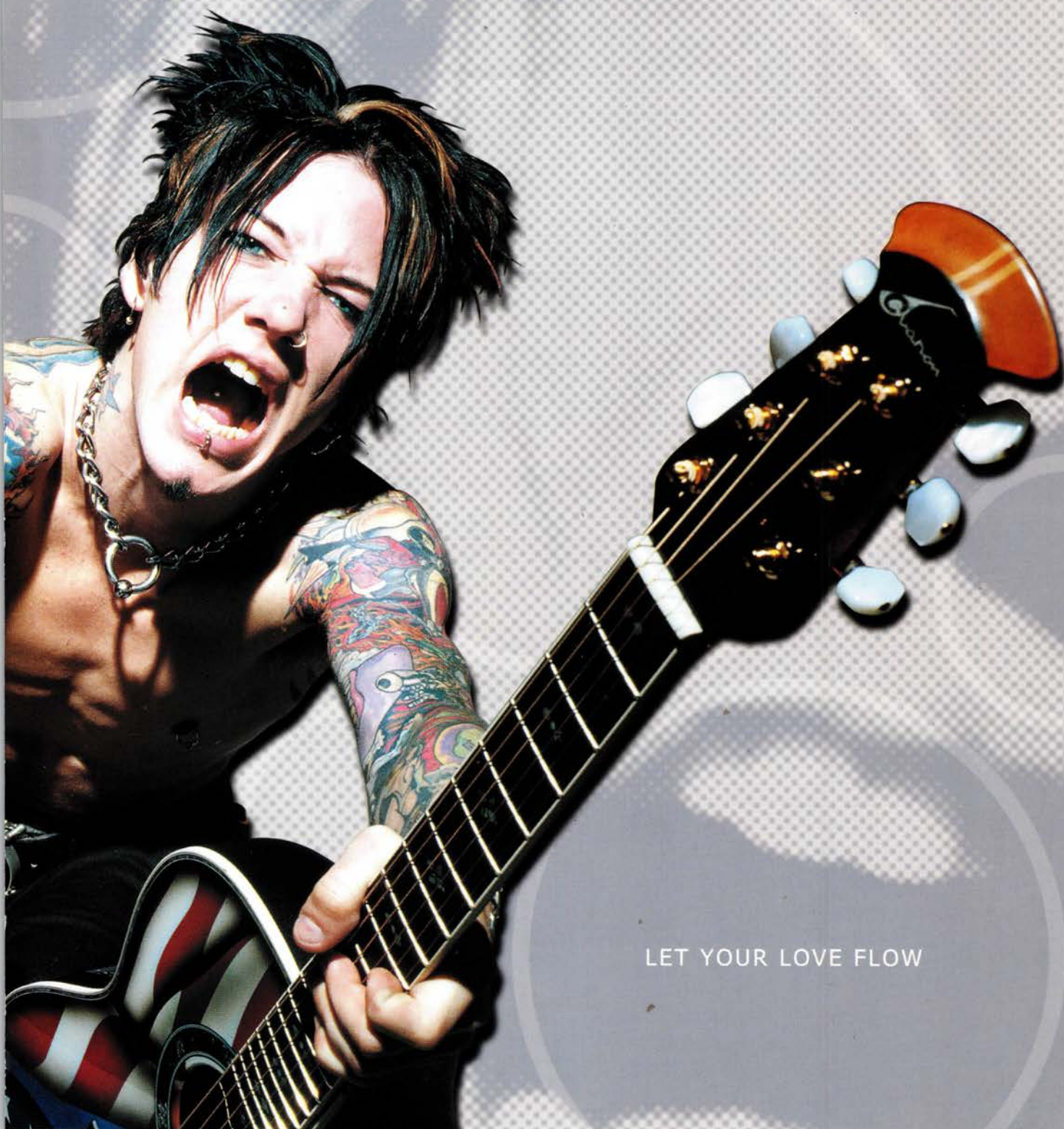
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outputs

DJ ASHBA - djasbba.com

Photo: Neil Zlozower



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